



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN  
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## Generosity births hope amid the despair of war in the Holy Land

Job creation beneficiaries' testimonials



Since October 7, financial hardships have increased for numerous Christian families, especially in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Struggling to make ends meet, worrying about their future and their children's future in their beloved homeland. Since the beginning of the war, The Palestinian Authority has been unable to pay the salaries of around 180,000 public employees, many of whom are Christian and haven't been paid since October 2023. Many companies have adopted a budget cut to ensure their continuation amid this war. Additionally, the suspension of many permits to cross the border has resulted in the sudden loss of jobs for over 100,000 individuals who worked in Israel, leaving them to face the difficult task of finding new employment in the West Bank, where job opportunities are extremely scarce. Many Christian families working in the tourism sector have also been extremely affected due to the complete halt of tourism-related businesses, with over 3,000 Palestinian Christians losing their jobs.

However, with the assistance of the Order of the Holy Sepulcher, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has directly employed and supported 173 people from various Latin parishes in the West Bank and East Jerusalem since October 2023.

In fact, as Sami El-Yousef, CEO of the Latin Patriarchate explains, "since the start of the war in Gaza, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has received from the Lieutenancies, via the Grand Magisterium, \$1.73 million destined for the emergency fund for both Gaza and the West Bank. Gaza has always been the priority, given the level of destruction, human loss, and lack of any basic commodities and infrastructure with most funding provided to secure the daily livelihoods. In the West Bank, after the concentration in the first two months of the war on pure humanitarian interventions such as food coupons; rental support, tuition support, utilities support, medical expenses, etc., given the major spike in unemployment, several hundred thousand dollars of the funds received were invested in job creation and income-generating projects".

This support has alleviated many financial burdens for those who have been unemployed, lost their jobs, or were at risk of becoming unemployed, providing financial relief and hope for a more stable future for many Christian households in the Holy Land.

The Job creation fund was divided into different programs created to support different cases. First, paid internship to help unemployed fresh graduates. Second, 4-6 months job opportunities, targeting those who have lost their jobs. Third, grants of 2000\$ for struggling businesses or start-ups. To note, 370 applications were received for the grant, but the funds could only cover 11 businesses. Fourth, short term hands-on employment, this supported construction workers who have lost their jobs due to the cancellation of permits.

**Below are heartfelt testimonies of how the generosity of others has impacted the life of many individuals and families during these times of war (to respect their private lives, the names of people involved appear only with initials).**

**N.A.**, the sole breadwinner in her family, was born in Gaza and is now 30 years old, she moved with her family to **Ramallah** in hopes of a better life prospect. She has three unemployed younger siblings who couldn't complete their education due to financial constraints. Her older sister, who is 33, was unable to continue her studies beyond the 5th grade due to being a slow learner and lacking the necessary support after their move to Ramallah. Previously, she received assistance at the Holy Family School in Gaza. N.A.'s father is 60 years old and suffers from numerous health issues, which prevent him from working. He has completely lost his sight due to high blood pressure, and currently suffers from lung infections, living on a constant supply of oxygen. He requires daily assistance and care, hence, N.A.'s mother is a stay-at-home who supports the family through her care for her husband and the father of her children.

N.A. was fortunate enough to complete her studies and earn a Diploma in Business and Project Management. Yet, despite earnestly searching for a job, she couldn't land one. When the war in Gaza began, N.A.'s financial situation became worse than ever, struggling to provide necessities for life, due to the destruction of their house and family shop in Gaza, which were their only source of income before the war. They faced a dire situation up till the Latin Patriarchate stepped in and provided N.A. with a temporary job through the job creation program. She was employed as a secretariat in the Christian Education Office of the Latin Patriarchate in Ramallah. N.A. expressed her gratitude for this opportunity, which has been life-pivotal, saying: ***"The reemployment project has been life-changing for me. It has helped ease my daily worries and struggle of providing life necessities for me and my family in these devastating times. The war significantly hurt our finances. I thank God for this opportunity and hope to keep advancing in my career to be able to continue supporting my family"***.

**The Antonian Charitable society in Bethlehem** has been significantly impacted by the recent war, disrupting its operations, and affecting the well-being of both residents and staff. The situation has led to a decrease in the institute's budget due to receiving fewer donations and project funds. In addition, many families of elderly residents at the elderly house of the society could no longer afford the residency fees and medical expenses. Additionally, the elderly house helped accommodate 7 new homeless individuals in these times of war, two of whom are a mother and a father from Gaza. This increased the strain on the resources and heightened pressure to meet the needs of the residents and maintain the services offered.

Thanks to the financial support the Antonian Society received from the Latin Patriarchate, it was able to recruit 9 unemployed individuals from Bethlehem: four Nurses, a physiotherapist, a cleaner, a

nutritionist, a maintenance worker, and an accountant. They were also able to maintain the existing employees' salaries.

Offering these jobs through the job creation funds has helped ensure the continuation of the facility, and changed the financial state of many families, **the following are short testimonies from some of those who were employed at the Antonian Society:**

**D.S.** works as a nurse, and her salary has been essential for covering her family's rent and utilities. **N.K.**, also a nurse, has used her income to support her children's education and provide for their daily needs. **S.K.** found that her job helped maintain her household's financial stability by meeting daily expenses and necessities. **S.S.**, the maintenance worker, provided for his family when he could not ensure their basic needs were met.



**T.A.** is a divorced woman **from Jerusalem**, aged 54 years old, who currently lives with her mother and sister in a rental house. Her mother is retired. T.A. was laid off from her job at the beginning of the war due to financial constraints faced by the institute she worked at. She spent 3 months without any stable income to sustain herself. The whole household lived off the small amount received from her mother's retirement plan. T.A. has previously received support through **the LPJ Women Empowerment Program**, which helped her enroll in an online course that taught her how to make simple beauty products. This small business has been a great source of help for her yet with the War's constraints many stopped purchasing. Faced with an increase in living expenses due to the war, and no hope for a job opening, she felt helpless...until the Latin Patriarchate was able to secure her with a job through the job creation program and employed her as a secretariat at the Patriarchate's social department.

**M.S. from Beit Jala**, with a visual impairment disability, received an internship at Bethlehem Arab society for Rehabilitation for the period February – May 2024, after he lost his work as "religious souvenirs street vendor" since the start of the war in October 2023. He shares: "The AFAQ Project helped connect unemployed people with employers, including people with disabilities and providing them with income"



**N.M. from Taybeh**, testified that from the paid internship opportunity he was able to contribute to the household expenses and supported his family because his father and sister lost their jobs during the war. He said: "The opportunity I received through the AFAQ project served as a cornerstone of support for both me and my family".

To note, the Internship project has helped around 9 interns allocate a permanent job.

**Zayyan Band, from Beit Sahour**, consists of 36 young men and women who perform traditional shows and songs at weddings and public events. They received a grant to help sustain and grow their business. **E.H., from Zayyan Band, shares:** "Your support is more than just a financial donation; it is an expression of trust that enhances our ability to create positive change in our society. We have seen firsthand how your cooperation in supporting Christian youth with small grants can significantly impact their lives, especially as we develop our musical and artistic business."

**K.A. from Ramallah** was unemployed for a month and a half before being assigned to supervise a short-term project renovating old buildings, such as schools and offices, for the Latin Patriarchate in Ramallah. This project provided employment for seven construction workers who had lost their jobs due Israel's halation of all Palestinian construction-worker's permits. As their supervisor and the one who helped allocate them, K.A. testifies that this opportunity has alleviated the financial stress of these fathers, who have children to feed and care for. Although the payment is neither permanent nor as much as they used to receive in their work in Israel, it makes a significant difference in these unprecedented times. This gave them something to do, rather than sit and wait for things to get better. Similar projects were also conducted in Aboud, Beit Sahour, and other parts of the diocese, providing temporary financial relief for many construction workers, who remain unemployed awaiting the end of the war, relying on God's mercy and grace amid socio-economic difficulties and political tension in the Holy Land.

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*(July 2024)*

