



NEWS FROM Seraj Library Project

Empowering communities in Palestine, one library at a time

August 2022

Our summer Newsletter celebrates the Opening of the Seraj Library and Cultural Center in Birzeit

(Did you read about the Kufor Aqab Opening last week?)



Laurie, speaking at the Opening.

Hello dear friends & supporters,

Many of you who have been on the Seraj journey with us since the beginning will remember that our initial dream was to open a community library in the village of Birzeit. This is the dream that began in 2005 launched the work of Seraj Library Project. For several reasons, the dream of a library in Birzeit was delayed in favor of other communities that were more appropriate partners at that time. But we never fully lost the vision of what a beautiful library space in Birzeit could do for the community.

Seventeen years later we are overjoyed to see our dream finally become reality! At the request of the Birzeit municipality, we renovated a worn-down 150-year-old courtyard and its six houses. With the cooperation with Riwaq organization and a great contractor we've rehabilitated these ruins into one of the most beautiful public spaces in Palestine!



Our vision at Seraj has always been that every single member of society deserves free high quality access to knowledge and culture in a safe and beautiful space. I know a lot of people in this day and age question the usefulness of a library. We have google, we have electronic books, what is exciting or important about a library anymore?

Friends, let me tell you this: the public library is the only space left in the world in which people can spend hours and hours indoors, using the facilities, meeting friends, planning, creating, dreaming, imagining, and yes, reading...without the expectation of spending money. The public library has evolved to become a meeting house, or a modern salon, in which people from all kinds of backgrounds can meet, inspire one another and create something new and beautiful for their communities and our world.



Our vision for our library and cultural center in Birzeit is to bring people from all over Palestine to meet together and use the space. For artists and musicians to mingle with writers, for retirees to meet and have fun while sharing their wisdom with fresh college graduates, for kids to come and enjoy the beautiful and whimsical design and for their parents to relax in the café knowing it's a safe space.

The rehabilitation of the space and opening of the center is just the first phase. The next phase, for which we need your support, is to really bring it to life. We want to bring the highest quality books for both the children and adult libraries, to finish the café to really draw in people, to create a

professional stage with sound and lighting for up and coming artists, musicians, and writers to showcase their work.

We are excited to watch Seraj grow and create a place for people to connect and inspire one another. We are so thankful to have been able to share this dream with you for nearly two decades and can't wait to continue to show you the joy we are bringing to the Birzeit community and beyond.

In friendship and appreciation,
Laurie Salameh, *Seraj Executive Director*

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