



Newsletter - December 2022

Flourishing For a Time Such as This

Seraj Library Project had an amazing year. Please know our progress comes at a difficult time for Palestine and our partner communities.

Our success is the result of **your unwavering commitment to bring spaces of light** (safe, beautiful and open) where Palestinian children and their families can engage the wider world through books and cultural activities. And hear stories. Our ANNUAL REPORT TO DONORS (an inspiring story itself) details much of this work and our unexpected opportunities. Please have a look. And see the inspiring report by Laurie Salameh below.

Thank you for your partnership with Seraj Palestine. Thank you for your support this year, and every year.

[Click here to see Seraj Annual Report to Donors](#)

[Click here to contribute to the mission of Seraj](#)

Here is a **report by our Seraj Palestine Executive Director, Laurie Salameh** about the current moment in Palestine:

Dear Friends,

As I sit here writing this newsletter update to each of you, I am struck by several emotions simultaneously. First, appreciation. **I am deeply thankful for all that Seraj has achieved this year, with your support.** We not only opened two new libraries, alongside our storytelling and cultural centers, in communities that desperately needed them, we also hosted (with much success!) our first Seraj tour to Palestine. We held the first international storytelling festival here in Palestine, bringing professional storytellers from around the world to perform here, we held a joint exhibition alongside three amazing organizations of Nazareth's old city in our storytelling center, we celebrated our annual Ramadan Nights festival, and we opened our libraries with regular hours to students, young children and families. None of this could have been achieved without your support.

None of it could have been achieved without the hours of dedication of our board in the US, and without our amazing staff and board here in Palestine. And for that I feel so very proud! Over the course of 17 years we have developed an incredibly dedicated and talented group of people who believe in the mission of Seraj, of establishing safe and beautiful spaces for communities to use to improve their lives here in Palestine.

But I must admit that in addition to appreciation and pride, **I also feel deep sadness when I look around my adopted homeland.** I cannot deny that the situation here in Palestine has deteriorated to one of the lowest points in the past few decades. The Occupation continues to destroy the lives of so many people, regulating every movement and decision people are allowed to make, stripping

them of basic rights and dignity, and dehumanizing this entire population to the entire world.

There is a hopelessness that has settled on the entire population. There is not one person here who remains untouched by the evilness of the Occupation. It seeps into every area of our lives. Even as we prepare to celebrate Christmas here in the holy land, there is a giant cloud of despair as we wake up each day and mourn the lives that have been senselessly lost the day before.

But what can we do, except continue to push against the despair? What I have seen with Seraj this year is that seemingly small actions are life-giving. By opening our libraries and centers regularly to the public, people have beautiful and safe spaces to go, to relax, to learn, to enjoy. To breathe. My heart is overjoyed when I see students gathering in our libraries after classes, sometimes to study, sometimes with a guitar, sometimes to play games. I couldn't be happier when I see the retirement clubs using the libraries to laugh and interact with others outside of their homes.

What feels like something insignificant to those of us who had the luxury of being raised in the US with access to a lively community library is actually incredibly significant here in Palestine, and maybe even life-changing. But in all the darkness, despair, and destruction surrounding us here, Seraj continues to be a source of light, of hope and of joy. A small escape from the difficult reality of life in Palestine, a few moments each day for people to feel normal. And maybe even happy.

This is why Seraj might be more important than ever before. Our communities need and deserve the chance to enjoy a shared community library. And your support is what allows them the chance to do it. With your support, we can expand our hours and our activities. We can even expand our locations! And together we can give these beautiful spaces and life-giving activities to communities here in Palestine.



Laurie Salameh, Executive Director, Seraj Palestine

I continue to remain hopeful because I have seen the beauty and goodness of Seraj's communities, both here in Palestine and in the US. I can only look to the future with hope as we continue our work together on both sides of the ocean.

Merry Christmas from Palestine,
Laurie Salameh



In case you missed it, the 10 minute 2022 Seraj Tour video.



SERAJ TRIP 2022 final

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Click on the above thumbnail to view the 10 minute film.

[Link to 8 daily Dispatches from the tour](#)

[Link to the Tour Itinerary](#)

Seraj is Flourishing. And **we need your support to keep these wonderful programs alive.** Seraj Palestine will need about \$240,000 to achieve their vision for 2023. We invite you to be part of this glorious mission, to help us all meet this challenge. With your gifts and your good will. Seraj Library Project offers our profound thanks.

[DONATE to the important work of Seraj Here](#)

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