



# NEWS FROM Seraj Library Project

Empowering communities in Palestine, one library at a time

August 2022

## Our summer Newsletter celebrates the Opening of the Storytelling Center & Library at Kufor Aqab

(more on the Seraj Library and Cultural Center in Birzeit soon)

### Hello dear friends & supporters,

Join me in enthusiastically celebrating the launch of our new library and storytelling center in the historic old village in the Jerusalem-area community of Kufor Aqab! This dream has been many years in the making, as our friends and supporters well know.

I am more than thrilled to tell you we are finally open to the public! Since the day we have opened, we've had a steady flow of visitors, both to the library and storytelling center. Stay connected to us to hear about our exciting programs.



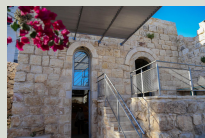
Laurie, speaking at the Opening.

And from the bottom of our hearts, we thank you for your support and continued encouragement to our work.

So, read on and enjoy.  
Much love from Seraj in Palestine,

**Laurie Salameh,**  
Seraj Palestine Executive Director

The idea of establishing a Palestinian national storytelling center arose from the need in preserving and retelling community stories and folklore, and the support sprung up in honor of the **memory of our former board chair, Reverend Cotton Fite**, who used to travel to Palestine on "listening tours," to hear first-hand stories of people in the Seraj communities. This has been a journey of several years, which included searching for the right space, rehabilitating that space, delaying work due to covid, facing security concerns, designing an inspirational center and creating simple but meaningful and effective programs.



This summer we held our grand opening ceremony at our center, located in the historic old village of Kufor Aqab as part of a "cultural hub." Seraj, along with several other cultural and community-focused organizations, are part of a strategy designed by the architectural preservation organization, Riwaq, to bring to life the old buildings and add much-needed safe spaces to community members.

Our grand opening was celebrated by the attendance of our many important partners and donors, including Riwaq, the Kufor Aqab village council, the French government, the Palestinian Ministry of Culture, the Bank of Palestine, Seraj's board members, many ambassadors to Palestine and our many community friends and partner organizations. We couldn't have been prouder of our cooperation to bring this center to life.



The work we are doing in Kufor Aqab is extremely important. **First of all, we cannot underestimate the power of providing a safe and**

**beautiful space to the community to allow access to information, knowledge and culture.** This is especially important in such a high-pressure, crowded, and often unsafe community.

**Secondly, storytelling is what connects us as humans, and stories are incredibly powerful.** Stories can be used to victimize and sow hatred between people, but on the other end of the stick, stories can be used to heal, empower, and build communities. Storytelling is one of the most powerful tools we have in our toolbox as humans, we each have untold stories inside of us, and it is our responsibility to take these stories out, shape them and share them. Stories connect us to the past and help us to build our future.

---

**We invite you** to join the Opening in a short video. **Fidaa Ataya**, Storytelling Center Director and our friend, helped Laurie capture much from the opening for us. ([click on the picture to play the video.](#))



**Our Contact Information**  
\*{{Organization Name}}\*  
\*{{Organization Address}}\*  
\*{{Organization Phone}}\*  
\*{{Organization Website}}\*



\*{{Unsubscribe}}\*