



NEWS FROM **Seraj Library Project**

Empowering communities in Palestine, one library at a time

May 2023

Dear Seraj Supporter,

The COVID pandemic was devastating for Palestinians, who place a high value on education and family connections, and whose digital access to the larger world was already limited. In countless ways, the despair and isolation of the last three years have compounded the daily humiliations and random intrusions that characterize life under occupation.

Seraj's mission—to spread light and hope where there is darkness and despair—is more important than ever. I invite you to read on, to share in the moments of joy that Seraj creates in the midst of an often difficult time and place.

And [come visit us in October!](#) Your life will be changed in ways that it can never be changed by reading.

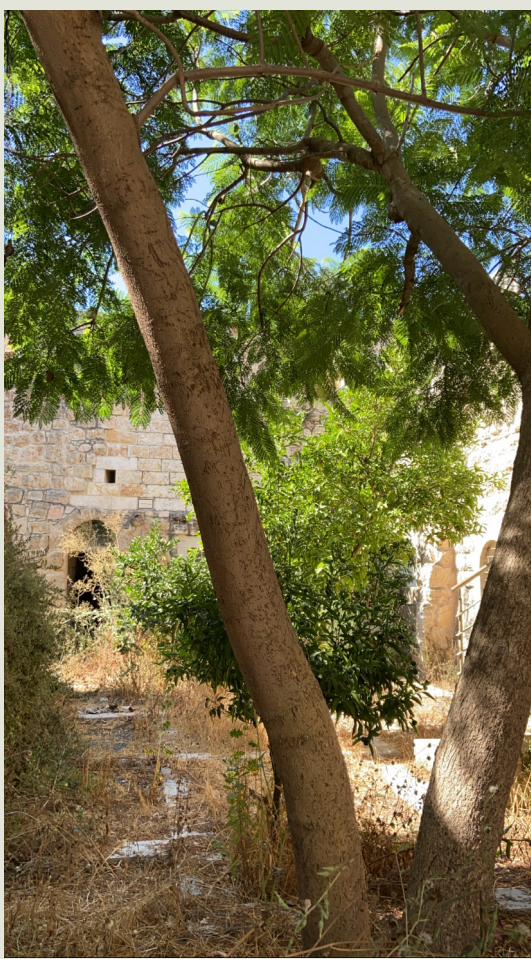
Laurie Salameh
Executive Director, Palestine

Now More Than Ever

Since pandemic restrictions have lifted, Seraj has welcomed over 1,000 unique visitors to each of its new sites.

The [Seraj Library and Cultural Center](#) shares its home in Birzeit with about 8,000 residents and the prestigious Birzeit University. During the day, programming targets children and senior citizens. After the university campus closes and until 9:30 pm, Seraj offers a unique place for students to gather.

The design of the cultural center—6 rooms encircling a historic courtyard—included space for a cafe and computer lab, but additional funding is needed to complete the project. [Can you make a mid-year gift to help Seraj realize the dream of opening these much-needed resources?](#)





The abandoned courtyard of a historic home and its preservation as a Seraj Cultural Center.

The [Seraj Library and Storytelling Center](#) is in Kufor Aqab, which was once a sleepy village and is now a crowded city of over 100,000, because it is the only place where families can live if some members have Jerusalem IDs and others have West Bank IDs. The center has become a destination for field trips from schools, clubs, and other Seraj libraries. The storytelling room and garden are always busy.



The need is greater than ever. There are waiting lists for programs like the Retirement Club, Storytelling Academy for Women, and Yoga and Storytelling but, to meet the demand, Seraj needs to hire more staff. [Your contribution will provide much-appreciated funding.](#)



In Kufor Ni'ameh, at the third library that Seraj established, three generations share their cultural heritage.

Seraj Hosts Storytelling Festival

Seraj hosted the first international storytelling festival in Palestine in November, with storytellers from as far away as Guyana and Italy. [Enjoy video highlights](#) of an amazing program of fairy tales, folk tales, and wonder tales performed in both English and Arabic.



Stories not only define who we are, but they connect us to the past, pave the way towards our future, and help us to understand other human beings.

2023 Seraj Tour of Palestine

October 8-18

The 2023 tour is on

The itinerary is available
Registration is open
But space is limited
So don't miss out!

[Reserve your spot today.](#)

2022 Tour Participants Say

"This trip was life-changing for me. I saw first-hand the effects of the occupation on Palestinians. I saw for myself without the filters of politics, media, or history."

Anne Koeber

"Once you are there, you are changed in a way that you can't be changed by reading."

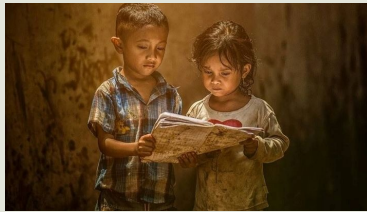
— Galen Burghardt

"My experience of Palestine was full of wonder, admiration, and connection. We were well cared for and extremely well fed!"

— Sue Uhlig



Meet Zaina



Zaina Hamdan is a young resident of the Chicago area. For her National Junior Honors Society service project, she started a GoFundMe site on behalf of Seraj, and [raised over \\$2500 in just 5 weeks!](#)

Your gift to Seraj by June 30 will help Seraj close a budget gap and share its light with more of those in need.

To donate to the important work of SERAJ

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