

E-Mail von Suzan Sahori, 28. Juli 2014

To all the friends and supporters of Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans.

We hope this message finds you well. We at BFTA would like to take this opportunity to share our feelings and concerns regarding the current ongoing situation in Gaza.

BFTA is distraught to watch the killing of hundreds of civilians, particularly the deaths of so many children. We are outraged at the lack of humanity that the international community has displayed in response to this worsening situation, and their apparent disregard for Palestinian lives in Gaza and also the West Bank. What is even harder to understand is how, rather than discouraging the crimes being committed against an unarmed civilian population (defined by international law as a war crime), many nations and world leaders have been passive in the face of them.

Where is the justice in this situation? Why is the life of an Israeli soldier, who dies doing their job, more important than the lives of four innocent children murdered playing football on the beach? Why are the panic attacks of an Israeli citizen received from hearing sirens more concerning than the suffering of Palestinians who have lost their entire families and property to this ongoing massacre? Palestinians are people too. People who deserve to be treated with dignity. People who deserve respect. People who are as deserving of living in peace and security as anybody else in the world.

This massacre has not only taken an emotional toll on all of us at BFTA, it has also disrupted all tourist activity in Bethlehem. Currently there are no tourist groups coming here, and our hotels are empty. Manger Square is completely deserted as people are afraid of coming into the city, and are being actively discouraged to visit Palestinian areas. This has resulted in a decline in the local economy-- all shops and other small businesses that rely on tourism are suffering economic losses due to the on-going war on Gaza. As previously it will take a long time before these tourist areas recover financially.

Unfortunately, it feels like all we can do is hope and pray that this conflict ends soon, and peace with justice can be finally realized in the region. But at this time we do want to share a small but significant sign of hope in this situation. With our Israeli fair trade partners, 'Sindyanna of Galilee' we maintain our work through the 'Fair Trade Fair Peace' projects we have developed together. We will continue to work to bring out the message of peace and justice which we jointly share as organizations. We stand alongside each other as we seek to overcome this hurdle that has been presented to us, and are in regular contact as we work towards a different, more hopeful and peaceful future.

Finally, we at BFTA ask that by whatever means you show your concern for the suffering people of Gaza, and make a stand against this cycle of violence. Although we hope that the bombing will stop shortly, the ongoing impact of this current war will have a lasting legacy into the future. Comparisons are always difficult, and all human loss is a tragedy. In recent times the mother of two children lost in the Malaysian plane crash cried out 'how can I go on, they are everywhere, to the left, and to the right of me?'. Imagine this for hundreds of mothers, and fathers in Gaza as more children, young people and adults are being lost daily. What will be the legacy of such loss of life? Please join us in making a stand where you are.

Please remember us and all innocent people at this time. BFTA is incredibly thankful for all of your love, time and support, and look forward to our continued cooperation. Thank you for reading this message and for sharing it.

Suzan Sahori

Executive Director

Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans