



Early Autumn Newsletter – September 2015

Dear Friends,

Greetings and peace from Ramallah!

As summer turns into autumn, I would like to take a moment to express my deep gratitude for your ongoing care and concern for the Ramallah Friends Meeting and, indeed, all the peoples of our beautiful and troubled region.

Like you, we were deeply distressed to witness the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons –Syrian, Iraqi, Yemeni, and Palestinians. Some are even double refugees, such as Palestinians displaced in 1948 who found refuge in Syria. Palestinian refugees in Syria were mainly living in Yarmouk refugee camp outside Damascus. However, the last few years of war and hunger, most have become refugees once again, fleeing to neighboring countries or risking their lives in travel to Europe. Indeed, my Friends, we are reminded that the Palestinians are the oldest unresolved refugee population in the world today. Suffering upon suffering.

We also marked the one year anniversary of the 2014 brutal attack on Gaza and its people –a majority of whom are also 1948 refugees. Our hearts break with the knowledge of entire families killed, homes yet to be rebuilt, and the ongoing siege which will soon render Gaza uninhabitable. Where will the people go? How will they survive? This summer, we experienced a heat wave with record temperatures. Without full water rights and lack of infrastructure, it was the most vulnerable and impoverished who suffered the most.

This all weighs heavily on our hearts, as we continue the path of nonviolence, of peacemaking, of witness here in the middle of Ramallah at the Meetinghouse now over 100 years old.





We have steadfastly continued with our ministry of nonviolent peace building and Quaker Witness. Visiting groups of Mennonites, of seminarians, pastors and members from many denominations, of Interfaith Peace Builders, of a cadre of 30 from the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel, of American Friends of Sabeel, **all** come requesting and receiving presentations on Quakers, or gender equality or the theology of nonviolent resistance. They come from Norway, Great Britain, Sweden, Germany and the U.S. Global Ministries (UCC and Disciples of Christ) have continued to come and meet with Jean, and are looking forward to a Bible Study they have requested as well as a video about how the US can respond to Kairos.

The lunchtime, afternoon and evening meal hospitality always offered to visitors is both a ministry of welcome and a ministry of encouragement.

With this context as our daily bread, I cannot help but ask myself, each and every day: "What sustains us? How might we be empowered to move forward, to resist structures of domination and establish the reign of God and a household of life?"

Well, my Friends, I affirm that we continue because something is so sacred to us, that it means more than our comfort and convenience. It might be God, or the Spirit, or the sacredness of life, or mother earth, or equality and freedom, human rights and human dignity. Whatever it is, it nurtures us.

In turn, your friendship nurtures the Meeting. We are enlivened because you remember us, visit us, and offer us what you can to our small, shared ministry whose ever enlarging impact inspires thousands.

In July a Friend from Oxford England who recently served for a second time in Palestine through the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme shared these words:

*"What a haven of peace and recuperation the Meeting House in Ramallah was for me! Life is very busy when one is in one's EAPPI placement - so much information, so many difficult stories and challenging situations, but in the quiet and fellowship of Friends' gathering in Ramallah it was possible to find some much needed inner peace. I am so grateful that the Meeting House is still there in Ramallah and so grateful that I could once again meet you there, upholding the Meeting and a tower of strength at its center. The Sumud you embody - affirming life - is so inspirational.*

*Another real joy about attending Meeting in Ramallah is the opportunity to meet others there from all over the world who are also striving for the same peaceful, just vision of the world. Conversations after Meeting are always fruitful and spiritually so refreshing. I only wish that during my three months I had more Sundays free when I could have been with Friends in Ramallah."*

Likewise, a Peace Studies student from Singapore shared her appreciation:

*"I just wanted to thank you again for kindly making the time to meet with us midst your busy schedule. We just concluded our few days of orientation, and we can see that your conversation with us really helped to frame our understanding of the complexities here. Thank you for sharing your insights, and I really hope to be able to visit you again in Ramallah. The hospitality was most humbling, down to the lovely date cookies! It is clear to see how God has worked through you in sharing His love with all those around, and I wish you and yours continued blessings as you shine His message of love and justice."*



Despite the many challenging realities, the community that journeys to the Ramallah Friends Meeting continues to inspire and to be inspired. It is local and international, young and old. Many Palestinian members of the Meeting who are currently living or studying abroad, returned for the summer. This brought much joy and renewed energy.

Friends journey to our Meetinghouse because there is something there which sustains us. Something so sacred that it means more to us than our comfort or convenience. We are nurtured. Here, together, we find a path forward which empowers each one of us in our own way to resist structures of domination and establish the reign of God and a household of life.

Your friendship is invaluable.

Jean Zaru, Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

Arlene Kelly, Clerk, Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quaker)

You are most welcome to join us for Meeting for Worship  
On Sundays at 10:30 a.m.

The Meetinghouse is located in the middle of town, across from Rukab Ice Cream  
And next to the Natshe Bldg.  
Visit our web site at: [www.rfmq.org](http://www.rfmq.org)

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Contributions to support the Ministries of the Meeting can be sent to  
Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting - Quakers (FRFMQ)  
1515 Cherry St.  
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