



A Plea for Peace in Gaza from an Orthodox Christian in Palestine

How Many Mothers Will It Take?

As we enter August 2014, my Church will enter a very special time of fasting and prayer for the Holy Mother of God, the Theotokos for the Holy Dormition, the Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary (Aug 15/28). “You gave birth to the Salvation of the world, through which we were uplifted from earth to heights...Hail! O Ever-Blessed, Pure One, shelter and strength; rampart and fortress to those who sing: “Praise the Lord all His works and exalt Him in all the ages.” (Akathist Hymn)



At this same moment in time, here in the Holy Land we have entered a slaughter of the worst kind where over 7,000 people are seriously injured and traumatized. The brutal Israeli attacks on Gaza have just turned into a massacre because over 1300 people have been killed most of them mothers and children. Maybe this tragedy will stop if the mothers of the 59 Israeli soldiers tell Israel to stop the bloodbath right now because unfortunately the American administration is not and wants to increase military support to Israel beyond 3.1 billion annually. Everyone says that Israel has a right to defend itself but does that mean a new holocaust for Palestinians? The churches in Gaza cannot handle any more people sleeping on the floor because the homeless and displaced are becoming over 200,000 people. The UN is paying a very high price with the killings of several of their staff because Israel keeps attacking schools where families try to find shelter. Today (July 30) as I write this reflection another UN school was attacked killing 16 children; in the same day the attack on the open market killed 17 people including two Palestinian journalists. This is one of the worst humanitarian disasters as Israel is using the excuse that it wants to stop HAMAS firing rockets. But it is a pretext for disproportionate military force. How many mothers does Palestine have to give to gain freedom and uplift the siege on Gaza. HAMAS is a “terrorist” organization in Israeli eyes but it is the only resistance movement Palestine has on the ground to fight for their just cause. Why doesn’t anyone understand that Gaza is an open air prison and the people have been asking for freedom over 47 years with the international community forgetting about them. Israel controls the



boarders, the air and the sea. They have made the place a living hell on earth.

I have been very disturbed with the hate that is building in our society ever since July 8th when the violence intensified between Israel and Palestine. The signs that say “Death to Arabs” and the signs in Jerusalem that say in Hebrew “There are no innocent people in Gaza,” are shocking. When the Israeli people hold signs in the middle of Tel Aviv that say “there are no children in Gaza,” it should be alarming to the world since we have over 250 dead kids in the last 21 days. I am not sure how any of the children left in Gaza can ever achieve peace in their hearts when they see so much destruction around them and when we have so many examples of the five year old little girl that saw her mother and father blow up in pieces and everyone in her family died but she was one of the very few to be able to get a permit and receive medical help in Jordan. These children are just traumatized for life. Why can't Israel open the boarders and let all the injured receive help in the West Bank hospitals that are willing to treat them. I am outraged that my sister in law spent two days on the phone calling everyone she knew in order to help her cousin Jeries (Jeries means George in Arabic) get medical care while his body is 80% burned and his left leg and right foot have been cut off. What annoyed me the most is the Israeli rules that if you are under 45 years of age you automatically cannot get a permit to travel thus his brother Anton (Tony) was not able to accompany him to the Jerusalem hospital. Jeries has had three strokes and has less than 20% chance to survive with over eight doctors helping him fight for his life. He needs all of his family members at this critical time.

The family has no other brothers, no sisters and the mother, Jalileh was killed on the spot in the Israeli attack on their home, Sunday, July 27th making her the first Christian mother to be buried in Gaza. She is originally from Taybeh and married all her life in Gaza where life before the 1967 Israeli occupation was relatively average. The elderly special needs father was forced to accompany Jeries to the St. Joseph's Hospital with only a 24 hour permit where only seven children (out of thousands) were the lucky ones to get out of Gaza for medical treatment; but one of them died in the emergency room, two seven year olds are brain dead, and one in intensive care with his leg cut off. One of the nurses said in Arabic “Where is Obama to come and see? Sister Valentine said: “How can man be so cruel and destructive?” The senior UN official said: “The world should hang its head with shame,” for letting Israel get away with human rights violations.

Jeries' father is extremely traumatized that the only thing he could tell anyone that come from the Christian community to visit him including the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Archbishop Theodosius (Attala Hanna) “I am not Hamas, I am not Fatah, what did I do to them?” He cries with every phone call and continues to talk about his wife Jalileh and the eggplant dish she was preparing when the house was bombed. He has lost everything but has a very deep faith in God.

Have you seen the evil face of Israel? How many more dead mothers will it take to see it? Does it make sense to you that 1.8 million people are locked up like in a cage.

“...incline Your ear O pure One and save us from sinking in sorrows; and preserve Your City O Theotokos from every siege of the enemies.”

I pray all of you will have a blessed Holy Dormition fast and please do not be fooled by your local media in thinking we are all terrorists. Please pray for peace in our world so we may see the Light of Christ in a land that has seen only darkness. Have a peaceful, blessed great day today!



Dr. Khoury lives in Palestine, on the West Bank of the Jordan River, in the Biblical land of Judea and Samaria. The Khourys returned to the family village of Taybeh following the Oslo Peace Agreement (1993) to boost the economy and raise their children with centuries-old Palestinian Christian values and traditions. She is the author of several Orthodox Christian children's books. Currently she is a volunteer in her husband's home village of Taybeh at St. George Greek Orthodox Church to help fundraise for a vital housing project aimed at helping families obtain their first home on land donated by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.