



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Meeting with Christian families in Jerusalem

During their pilgrimage to the Holy Land in late December 2023 and early January 2024, the Grand Master and the Governor General met with poor Christian families living in Jerusalem, supported by the Latin Patriarchate thanks to contributions from members of the Order. Dima Kalak Khoury, the Patriarchate's Director of Social Services, who led the Grand Magisterium's small delegation on these visits, agreed to present several concrete situations experienced by these people housed in Custody apartments.



A COURAGEOUS MOTHER

Nisreen, a 53-year-old mother struggling to overcome life's challenges after years of separation from her husband. Residing with her four children in a modest \$500 rented apartment, Nisreen suffers from diabetes and heart ailments, requiring frequent hospital visits. Reduced to unemployment due to her health problems, she struggles to obtain essential medications. Despite her eldest daughter's commendable efforts in contributing to the family income through a sales job at clothing company, the family still faces economic hardship.

Nisreen's eldest son dreams of studying electricity to become a professional technician, and with the generous support of the Order, we've pledged to make that dream a reality. The family's youngest son is currently in 10th grade. The dire economic situation of the family often leads to food shortages and the inability to pay utility bills.

The Latin Patriarchate contributions, whether in the form of food coupons or assistance with utility Meeting with Christian families in Jerusalem bills, provide essential relief to this family in need. Moreover, our empowerment programs aim to equip Nisreen's children with the skills and opportunities necessary to contribute meaningfully to their family expenses.



A FAMILY FIGHTING TO SURVIVE

Nancy, a 32-year-old mother of four, faces considerable challenges. Her husband, a 40-year-old taxi driver, has seen his income severely impacted by the ongoing war. Discrimination prevents him from picking up Israeli passengers, and the risk of attacks in Israeli areas further hinders his work. Struggling to make ends meet, the family was evicted from their Beit Hanina home due to the inability to pay the accumulated rent.

With the assistance of the Latin Patriarchate and the parish priest's help, they secured a small apartment. The house is so small that some members of the family are forced to sleep in the kitchen. To alleviate their financial strain, we facilitated Nancy's employment as an assistant in the Greek Orthodox Monastery kitchen, providing a modest income. Despite these efforts, the housing situation remains challenging, and we are working with the Custody of the Holy Land to find a more suitable home.

The parish priest contributes to their current rent, and our support extends to food coupons, utility bills, and the children's school fees in addition to their property tax (Arnona) through the East Jerusalem fund. In their dire circumstances, Nancy's parents try to help, but their limited income hinders consistent assistance.

This family is in urgent need, and the support of the Order can make a significant impact on their journey toward stability and a brighter future.



A HOUSEHOLD FACING UNEMPLOYMENT

Michelin, a woman separated from her husband, faces substantial challenges in caring for her two daughters – 21 and 24 years old – and her 22-year-old son. They reside in a cramped house provided by the Custody of the Holy Land, where unhealthy living conditions persist due to severe space constraints. Michelin, once employed in a daycare, lost her job during recent layoffs triggered by the ongoing war.

Unfortunately, one of her daughters, who used to work part-time in a hotel, also faced unemployment. The family's financial struggles are exacerbated by the fact that Michelin's son, the sole earner, works as a laborer in a hotel with very few hours and a meagre salary.

In response to their dire situation, we utilized the East Jerusalem fund to assist Michelin in settling accumulated debts with the national insurance. Additionally, we provided support with property tax payments and food coupons. Despite these efforts, their circumstances remain challenging, stressing the urgency of ongoing assistance.

The Order's emergency support can make a meaningful difference in alleviating the hardships faced by Michelin and her family during these difficult times.



A FATHER'S DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAKE OF WARTIME REPRISALS

Suleiman, a father of three, faces numerous challenges as he strives to provide for his family. His daughter, supported by a scholarship from the Custody of the Holy Land, is pursuing her education at Bethlehem University. Suleiman's older son, aged 23, successfully completed his optics studies with the assistance of Latin Patriarchate and is now looking for employment. Now, his second son aspires to study bus driving, seeking our support in this endeavor.

The family's financial difficulties are compounded by the fact that Suleiman's wife is unemployed and lacks formal education. Suleiman himself suffers from heart problems, requiring regular medications and checkups due to blocked arteries. Formerly employed as security guards at the Western Wall (Kotel), Suleiman and his two sons were unfortunately fired in a retaliatory action following the attacks on October 7. To address their pressing needs, we extend assistance with rent, food coupons, and utility bills.

The family, however, continues to face significant hardships, struggling to put food on the table. Ongoing support is crucial to empower and uplift this resilient family in their journey toward stability and self-sufficiency.



LIVING IN ONE ROOM WITH SEVEN CHILDREN

Nakhleh, in his mid-50s, faces formidable challenges as he resides with his wife and seven children in a one-bedroom apartment in the old city of Jerusalem. His life took a drastic turn when he had to cease working on a delivery van after being diagnosed with cancer, adding a layer of complexity to the family's struggles.

Despite these hardships, there's a glimmer of hope as his daughter, supported by our empowerment programs, pursues her studies in medical secretary training. Additionally, two of Nakhleh's grown-up sons aspire to become bus drivers, with one already receiving our support, and plans in motion to assist the second son.

However, the family's situation remains challenging: his wife is unable to work due to the demands of caring for their large family as the remaining children are still in school. We've stepped in to alleviate some of their financial burdens by assisting with food coupons, utility bills, property tax, and school fees. The gravity of their circumstances emphasizes the need for ongoing support.

With a significant number of family members, we are committed to ensuring Nakhleh's family does not face these challenges alone.

(March 2024)