



Another year ends while Palestinians are still seeking justice. With the current popular uprising, Palestinians feel even more misunderstood and frustrated, being portrayed as the aggressors. But maintaining our cultural heritage is in fact an act of resilience and this is practiced nation-wide. Bethlehem celebrating Christmas amounts to emphasizing our Palestinian cultural identity and Mayor Vera Baboun accounts for

the difficulties Bethlehem is facing but also offers hope that peace will prevail – eventually, and hopefully not too far in the future.

December marks the beginning of the Christmas season, and Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem are plentiful: it is celebrated three times, with the Catholic/Protestant Christmas Day on 25 December, the Orthodox Christmas on 7 January, and the Armenian Orthodox Christmas on 18 January! But December’s importance is felt all year long because Christmas provides the reason for all visitors and pilgrims who come to Bethlehem to see the famous grotto in the Church of the Nativity.

So if you are not yet in the Christmas spirit or would like to learn a bit more about how it feels in the town where it all started, read Muna Nassar’s article Christmas Spirit in Bethlehem and don’t forget to light a few candles and have some cookies ready. Be sure to look out for the Christmas parade that in 2015 is presented for the first time in Bethlehem, introduced here in *Despite of it All, We Still Deliver Christmas to the World*.

In the mean time, Bethlehem is resilient, resisting, persevering. Learn about its not-so-recent history in Khalil Shokeh’s wonderful account of events that also gives you a glance into the defiant spirit of Bethlehemites... Today, this spirit prompts Bethlehem to be active and engaged when it prepares to welcome visitors, pilgrims, and tourists. Read about the efforts undertaken to this end by the Bethlehem Municipality and the Bethlehem Development Foundation; learn about the renovation of the Church of the Nativity, places to see *Off the Beaten Path*, and the many festivals that offer fun times all year long; get to know the Football Club named *Capital of Christmas*, or what special approach to performances is adopted by the *Dalal Dabke* Troupe, and so much more! As sister Ferial shares in her article on the two Palestinian women that have been sainted in the last year, Christmas is about remembering and celebrating the spiritual source that wants us to bring peace to (all) our lives!

From the entire team of TWIP we wish you a blessed holiday season, in difficult times, whatever your religious or spiritual affiliation.

Bettina Ezbidi
Editor



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