

What Tough Year?

Saying that this year has been tough on Palestinians would probably be the understatement of the year. But then again, 2014 was tough, 2011 wasn't exactly easy, 2002 was horrible, 1967 was disastrous, and let's not even mention 1948 which was catastrophic! Somehow though, not only do we Palestinians manage to cope, but we manage to make-believe that all is well. And we just keep going. No, I take that back. It's not we make believe, we actually do believe that life should be good and that we ought to celebrate it despite pain, economic hardship, and, most of all, despite injustice.

New regulations from the tax authority necessitated a personal visit there, which took a couple of hours earlier today. I simply needed Maqasa invoices, which is what Palestinian companies (under Oslo Accords) need to charge clients under Israeli jurisdiction. I hadn't been to the new building before and was actually impressed with the modern setup and fascinated to see all the employees being so busy. "Symptoms of a functional state," I thought to myself. In the late afternoon, I went to see the Chocolate and Coffee Expo at Ramallah's fancy Grand Park Hotel. It was packed full. "A vibrant society!" is what I thought here. On the way back, I passed through upscale Ramallah and the imposing building-complex that houses several Palestinian ministries. "Quite inspiring for a country under occupation," I had to admit to myself.

Ramallah is surely not the only city that demonstrates Palestinian insistence to celebrate life. In fact, all Palestinian cities, towns, and refugee camps do. Taking the lead this season is Bethlehem; you cannot even keep up with the city's activities this December. What tough year? Have you seen the Christmas parade? Not exactly Rio, but really nice! For the first time ever, even the lively city of Nablus put up a beautiful Christmas tree on a main street. The number of examples is beyond the scope of this column, but the message is clear: Palestinians love life and insist on living an honorable one. And because they love life so much, some prefer to sacrifice their lives so that others would get a decent one.

As every year when New Year's Eve approaches, Palestinians pray for tranquility, peace of mind, and a decent living. Unfortunately, current conditions are not conducive to Palestinians aspirations, and peace seems as elusive as ever. Will Palestinians despair? Hell no! We're not that type; it'll be just another tough year!

It is my honor to welcome *This Week in Palestine's* new advisory board members for 2016. In alphabetical order they are: Naseer Al-Qidwa, Chairman of Board of Directors, Yasser Arafat Foundation; Naseer Rahmi Arafat, director of the Cultural Heritage Enrichment Center in Nablus; Ola Awad, President of PCBS / President of IAOS; Mazen Karam, Managing Director, Bethlehem Development Foundation; Bassim Khoury, CEO, Pharmicare LTD., and last but sure not least, Abeer Odeh, Minister of National Economy.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous, and Happy New Year!

Sani P. Meo
Publisher

