



Thank you for Caring

Dear Palestinian brothers and sisters living abroad,

The fact that you came all the way from Chile, Peru, USA, Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and probably other countries in order to attend the *Bethlehem District Diaspora Convention - Back to the Roots* can only tell that you care. You care about the country from which your parents, grandparents, maybe even forefathers beyond, originally came from. Your presence clearly shows that you care about Palestine, and for this concern we, your Palestinian blood relatives who are living here, would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You may have no idea how much these gestures of support mean to us.

In turn, I have no doubt that your hosts will take good care of you. Hospitality, after all is our middle name! I am certain that you will be well-accommodated; most definitely you will be well-fed, since food is our national sport! You will certainly be entertained, and probably taken on enjoyable tours. Sadly, however, don't let such indulgences deceive you into thinking that all is well in Palestine. Unfortunately, and as I expect you know already, it is not.

Allow me to candid. In fact, sometimes we feel that we, the Palestinians living in the Holy Land, are descending into obscurity. Most, if not all Palestinians feel that their earnest search and yearning for security, peace of mind, and a normal life have entered into a long, dark tunnel that never seems to end. Yet, they're often too proud to admit, too dignified to acknowledge their weakness – or to face reality and their inability to come out of this gloomy tunnel. They put up a bold face and pretend to be victorious, when in reality their hearts weep with sadness and pain from the injustice that has been inflicted upon them for decades now. So do have a big heart and forgive them if, like a drowning man, they seem to cling to a straw.

Foreign solidarity groups that come and visit Palestine are very much appreciated, but your visit carries a much profounder meaning. Because your ancestry is Palestinian, many will consider your visit as a return. However, I know better than to claim that this is your home, since you were born and have lived all your lives abroad. So I'll settle with "I hope that you will consider Palestine your home away from home!"

I sincerely wish you a pleasant and memorable stay in Palestine, and I do hope that you will, as this convention aims to achieve, reconnect with your old country by way of planting a tree, befriending a fourth cousin on Facebook, or sending a letter to an 80-year-old distant relative whose day will be brightened once she or he receives this letter of yours. God bless you all.

Sani P. Meo
Publisher

