



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Salaam and grace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As the highly contagious COVID-19 spreads around the world, the leaders and members of the ELCJHL are praying for the health of all the people around the world as this pandemic spreads. We know that you also are continuing to pray for the people in the Holy Land, who already face political and economic problems and often lack the basic health facilities to deal with this kind of epidemic.

The State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority are struggling to contain a local outbreak that has virtually halted air traffic in and out of the country, and has led to tens of thousands of people being quarantined, with 100+ people diagnosed with the illness in Israel and 30+ among Palestinians in the West Bank. These figures are increasing by the hour.

Across the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza, 2,900 Palestinians are being held in self-quarantine.

In the West Bank (and particularly in the Bethlehem district) schools, universities, banks, and government offices have remained closed, and hotels, restaurants, and dozens of souvenir shops across the city have voluntarily ceased operation.

This virus is having a huge impact on an already fragile and vulnerable economy. The Palestinian economy mainly depends on tourism. With the decisions taken to evacuate all tourists, to cancel all hotel reservations and to close churches and most major tourist attractions, the Palestinian economy is being hit hard already, and the devastating impact will last for few years to come. We know that pilgrims are not only canceling current trips but are also not making plans for future travel at this time.

These times are very difficult indeed. We fear they will become more urgent in the coming weeks and months. This situation has paralyzed life in Palestine and Israel. Every Palestinian home and business has been directly affected, and the people and institutions of the ELCJHL are no exception. As the ELCJHL runs 3 schools and 2 guest houses, we are expecting significant financial shortfalls as a result of this crisis. These shortfalls are due to expected decreases in local income (school fees, guesthouse revenues, and congregational contributions) due to:

- The complete shutdown of Bethlehem district and the shutdown of schools, as well as hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops where many people have lost sources of their livelihood.
- The stopping of most major airlines flights and all tourists have cancelled their reservations to the Holy Land for this year and part of next year. The whole economy is facing severe setbacks. Many shops in the Old City of Jerusalem are closed. Those that remain open are not receiving business.
- The cost of living has drastically increased as a result of the above.

*The Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Jordan and the Holy Land*



**الكنيسة الإنجيلية اللوثرية
في الأردن والأراضي المقدسة**

Furthermore,

- Parents cannot pay the tuition fees of their children.

We are deeply concerned that this will force us to shut down some of our institutions and lay off people if we don't manage to compensate for this loss.

Your assistance in this regard will mean that we can continue to keep our educational, ecclesiastical and Diaconal institutions open.

We appeal to you to pray for us as well assist the ELCJHL financially in this crisis. Your accompaniment is now needed more than ever before. The expected shortfall that we will face is as follows:

On the immediate run:

- During March & April 2020, we open the registration for our students the 2020/2021 scholastic year. The amount expected to be collected is: 650 students X \$230 = 149,500 USD (amount needed for our cashflow).
- During March & April 2020, we have the unrealized income from our guest houses estimated to be \$80,000 (amount needed for our cashflow).

On the medium term:

- From May till August: the church collects tuition fees from parents representing \$180,000 from our schools. We also expect shortfall in collecting this amount.
- It's also expected to have the same shortfall from the guest house income.

Any financial aid collected will be used in two directions:

1. To provide humanitarian aid to 100 families in the West Bank, particularly the Bethlehem district. The assistance will be an in-kind assistance by providing food kits. \$200 per household x 100 family x 3 months = \$60,000
2. To provide 50% of the employees' salary for a period of 2 months at least. It would be around \$200,000

We are trying to keep hope alive and increase the steadfastness of our people. We are fully aware that you're facing difficult times as well and we pray for you and for all people around the world to overcome this crisis.

Your Brother in Christ,

Sincerely,

Bishop Sani Ibrahim Azar



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land