

# UPDATE FROM AWDAAH AL-HATHALEEN IN UMM ALKHAIR 5784

Dear Friends at Kehilla,

You asked for an update about our situation at Umm Alkhair. We are in the South Hebron Hills, Area C, at the beginning of a region called Masafer Yatta.

We really appreciate all the support we have received from you guys over the past year. We want our relationship to go beyond money. We want more people to be involved in our monthly zoom calls. I should be able to have a young man and a young woman join us on our next call on Sunday Sept 24. We especially appreciate it when people come to visit our village. Recently, Seth came and earlier this year Rabbis Dev and David and Jim Haber came to Umm Alkhair. As I've mentioned before, I dream of visiting the United States and meeting more of you in person.

Things are changing every day and we cannot say what will happen from one day to the next. Our village is at the entrance to Masafer Yatta, and although we are not one of the villages in the military firing zone, we are still affected by our location. Last year, a permanent Israeli checkpoint went up outside of our village. When I returned last month from a trip abroad, the number of hours when the Israelis staff the checkpoint had increased. I was recently stopped and harassed at the checkpoint, but settlers are never harassed. People are losing hope but still we must resist what is happening, this situation which is more disgusting than an "occupation." The police and army consistently hassle Palestinians, especially children going to and from school. It feels like the IDF is increasing their targeting of the village, probably because it is at the entrance of Masafer Yatta.

Many local Palestinian workers park their cars at Umm Alkhair and then find other transportation to their jobs. The Israelis are still confiscating their cars, even the ones with legal Palestinian license plates. Because traveling in cars is no longer safe, people have begun using donkeys. I have an older sister who is almost done building their home. They ordered trucks with concrete for their roof. The Israelis saw the cement trucks, raided the building, arrested the workers, and forced the drivers to dump the concrete in the ground, which they still had to pay for. After two days of attempting to speak with someone at the Israeli Civil Administration, they were informed that the IDF can do whatever they want.

Settlers receive whatever they want from the Israeli government, including water, food, animals, electricity, and protection. We are located right next to the settlement of Carmel and settler harassment of our village is increasing and there have been more attacks on women than before. Some people in the village have been forced to sell their sheep because the settlers block them from using Palestinian owned grazing lands. We are planning a wedding for one of my brother's, but we are not sure where we will be able to set-up the traditional wedding tent. People are beginning to give up and are losing faith in the future.

Palestinians regardless of their age or gender are subject to being harmed and I am worried about the children's future because they are so often abuse victims. Please don't listen to the media as it is all fake. It's now worse than occupation, it is not a conflict, just total apartheid.

On behalf of our village, I want to wish Kehilla a sweet new year where everyone is treated with justice and treated like they are human beings.

Awdah al-Hathaleen