

9 April 2023

Update and prayer request from from Su McClelland, Embrace the Middle East

"I've never seen the community so depressed. It's like people have all but given up". These are words no-one wants to hear, but these words, have been uttered by Embrace's staff in recent months as they've visited Israel and Palestine. The death toll since the beginning of the year has already gone into 3 figures and includes several teenagers.

On my visit in February, I noticed a marked change in tone amongst many of the people I know. They're angrier and more despondent. Jericho was one of the West Bank towns in lockdown and so we weren't able to visit the Palestinian Bible Society. We did get to spend an hour with Elias one evening in Bethlehem. As he spoke, I was reminded of the words of St John, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." Despite the escalating violence, deteriorating economy, the incapacity of the Palestinian Authority and the ever-diminishing number of Christians, the team at PBS keep going. Elias said, "We motivate people in the local churches as well as in the local community to walk side by side in being an example leader as Christ in this land". Focussing on developing a servant heart they "provide hope, encouragement, stability and a positive direction to society".

The leadership programme is so well respected in Palestine that they have provided training for the Nursing Directors of a Bethlehem hospital, young leaders from the Hebron Governorate, the National Girls Football Team the Scouts' leaders in Palestine, Christian schools' teachers and headteachers as well as local churches and youth groups.

This Eastertide, we rejoice with our friends in the land of the Holy One, in resurrection hope. **Please continue to pray for them**, especially:

- finding a way to sustainably increase the capacity of the programme
- for wider engagement with the municipalities across Palestine
- for security stability in Jericho and for no more interruptions to their programme
- for more ways to encourage young people under the age of 15 to learn about servant leadership
- further engagement with Scout troops across Palestine.

Please also pray for Elias that the Holy Spirit strengthens and sustains him - he has such a big heart and a great vision, but the task is huge.

Mission Partnering Committee