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## Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH RAMALLAH FRIENDS MEETING

November 2019

Dear Friends,

*We are excited to share news of an important new development in the ministries of Ramallah Friends Meeting (RFM) since we last were in touch. In August, Mai Zaru assumed the full time position of Program and Outreach Associate. Having grown up in the Meeting and graduated from Ramallah Friends School before emigrating with her family to the U.S., Mai is wonderfully suited for her work. She takes up this role with a degree and strong experience in Special Education and a passion for her homeland. Her story is best told in her own words.*

At one point or another in life most of us experience isolation; a time and place where the earth continues to orbit the sun, yet we stand reluctant to release the pause button. There are times in our lives that we enter a state of spiritual isolation where, as E. Milligan expressed, *"the tides of faith seem too far out"*. It is a time where absolute darkness devours the light of mid-day; it is a time of yearning for guidance. A time for the spirit to be fed. So we wait. We wait and we hang ourselves, like a pair of shoes on a power line, warning of our isolation when we could be alerting of our service to this world.

Returning home is my spiritual grounding, my opportunity to serve, and as I accepted an opportunity to return home to serve Ramallah Friends Meeting and the wider community in Ramallah, I have needed to give consideration to the spiritual context for the work.

I returned in mid-August with the intention of laying solid groundwork and finding opportunities to bring people together; my job became the melting pot of passion and service rooted in the belief that *"caring matters most."* My week starts with the intervention programs I've developed for individuals with disabilities—a service sorely needed which is provided both in the Annex of the Meetinghouse and, when necessary, in the homes of students. Interspersed with this are scheduled visits to various NGOs, particularly exploring unmet needs for young adults. My week ends with a Sunday School lesson at the meeting. My journey through the week is full of spiritual enrichment. I am reminded again that it is through being *"patterns and examples"* as George Fox noted, that spiritual contact will override the state of isolation we experience daily here in Palestine. It is when



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we are grounded in that reality that we can release the pause button, we can resume, we can become assets in this world.

For me, an example of someone being empowered to release the pause button occurred amidst the organized chaos of this three-fold program, I heard an unfamiliar voice ripple across the room as the words “*how are you?*” bounced off the walls of the meetinghouse annex. It was a voice that I haven’t heard before, the voice of my 21-year-old student challenged by a deficit in interpersonal skills. From saying their first words (i.e. “mom”) and learning to walk on their own, to reading their first book or preparing their own lunch, these students are embodying the Palestinian slogan, “*to resist is to exist*”. This program is their voice, their reason, their resistance.

It was Desmond Tutu who observed that, “*a person is a person through other persons; you cannot be human in isolation; you are human only in relationships*”. Thus, as the kindled string lights continue to hang low across the crowded streets of Ramallah, it is our hope that you feel led to support this call of resistance, empowerment and education through ongoing prayers and as you are able, through financial contributions. It is through this support that we not only exist as a community, but are able to empower others across the miles in their struggle to resist the yoke of oppression.



In Peace,

Mai Zaru

Program & Outreach Associate

Saleem F. Zaru

Clerk, Ramallah Friends Meeting

Arlene Kelly,

Clerk, Friends of Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)