



SAVE AL-MAKHROUR
PRAYER VIGIL

LET US HOLD WATCH

John Habibi

*God of Peace,
As we keep watch in solidarity with Al-Makhrou, we ask for your guidance and strength.
Prepare our hearts to be vessels of peace and understanding,
granting us the wisdom to speak with humility
and the courage to listen with empathy.
We lift up all those who suffer in Al-Makhrou, the West Bank
and Palestinians throughout the Diaspora,
asking you to bring peace and justice
where there is fear, violence and despair.
Empower us to be voices of love and reason,
speaking out against injustice and oppression
with hearts set on peace and solidarity for our fellow creation
May we who do not yet know the boundlessness of your love
be awakened to the overwhelming light of your compassion,
breaking off the ways of empire
and embracing the loving mercies of your kingdom.
Bless us as we keep watch Lord,
transform us in your peace,
for change and justice for those suffering in Al-Makhrou*

Amen.



A PRAYER BEFORE PROTEST

Cole Arthur Riley

*Defiant God,
If you were the voice of the prophets, then you remain a God who speaks against
exploitation and oppression.*

*Silence the lies in our minds that tell us our fight is futile. Let hope in our cause
swell as we come together in this hour with a shared voice.*

*Awaken our full emotional range, that our work would be fuelled by a mysterious
entanglement of righteous anger and defiant hope.*

*Protect our bodies as we resist empire, especially the youngest and most
vulnerable among us. Make our protests thoughtful and inclusive, as we submit to
and learn from the disabled to create a diversity of paths to fight for justice.*

*Let us receive the inheritance of courage and steadfast dissent of our ancestors –
that our steps would be their steps, our bodies their bodies, our protest a sacred
echo as we boldly demand justice today in Al-Makhrou.*

*Sustain us, God.
With every step we journey, reveal us as forces for liberation in this world.*

Amen.



A PLEA FROM THE KISIYA FAMILY

This international day to save Al Makhroun aims at creating awareness over the effects of Israeli colonial-settler policies against the land and the people of Palestine. For almost a year Israeli officials have justified their crimes against innocent civilians in Palestine, “The Holy Land,” yet the struggle to save Al Makhroun, just like the Armenian Quarter, Jaffa Gate, Mount of Olives and Cremisan, among others, shows that the entirety of the Palestinian people falls victim of attempts to annex occupied territory, change its identity and forcibly displacing the indigenous people of the land.

Al Makhroun is the last green area unspoiled left in Bethlehem after 18 colonial-settlements strangled the birthplace of Jesus Christ from all sides. It is a UNESCO registered World Heritage Site since 2014 that continues to be threatened by Israeli policies aimed at expanding its illegal colonial presence in the area. Al Makhroun historically belongs mainly to Beit Jala, an ancient Palestinian Christian town, and the vast majority of the land-owners in Al Makhroun are Palestinian Christians, with many carrying U.S., Chilean, Australian, Canadian, Peruvian, Honduran, Salvadorian, Swedish and French passports, among others.

Today the whole area is threatened with annexation, including the recent approval of a new Israeli colonial-settlement in the World Heritage Site.

In 1948, during the Nakba, over 70% of the Christian population of Palestine became refugees. The Bethlehem Area (Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour) remained the main concentration of Christians in the West Bank, with its particular identity and heritage. Since the Israeli occupation of 1967 Bethlehem has shrunk and there are rarely open spaces. With Israeli control over the land and the people in Palestine, through racist legislation aimed at granting Jewish supremacy over Palestinians Christians and Muslims, the Bethlehem region has been turned into a reservoir for illegal colonial-settlement expansion: Thus the struggle to save Al Makhroun today represents a struggle to save the Christian presence in Palestine.

The campaign to save Al Makhroun has brought together people from different traditions that believe in a just and lasting peace based on basic principles such as freedom, justice and equality. For over a month Christians, Muslims and Jews have met in Al Makhroun to oppose the coordinated work of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the Israeli settlers (through the “Gush Etzion” council) and the Israeli government to dispossess Palestinians and replace them with Israeli settlers. This has been exemplified by the dispossession of the Kisiya family although they have the legal documents to prove their ownership.

Today we are calling upon everyone to support freedom and equality by opposing colonization, demanding the return of the Kisiya family to their land on the first of October when the military closed zone order ends, and the dismantlement of the Israeli colonial-settlements in the area, including the presence of settlers in Al Makhroun. By doing so you will be contributing to preserving the Christian presence, fulfil the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and build hope for a just and lasting peace.

*IN LOVE AND SOLIDARITY,
ALICE KISIYA*



A PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

George B. Sahhar

*God of Justice, we reach out to you at a time of fear, uncertainty, and injustice.
We reach out to You as our Heavenly Father and our only refuge.*

*We find courage, inspiration, and strength in your word revealed through Jesus:
“Blessed are the oppressed for they shall inherit the earth.”*

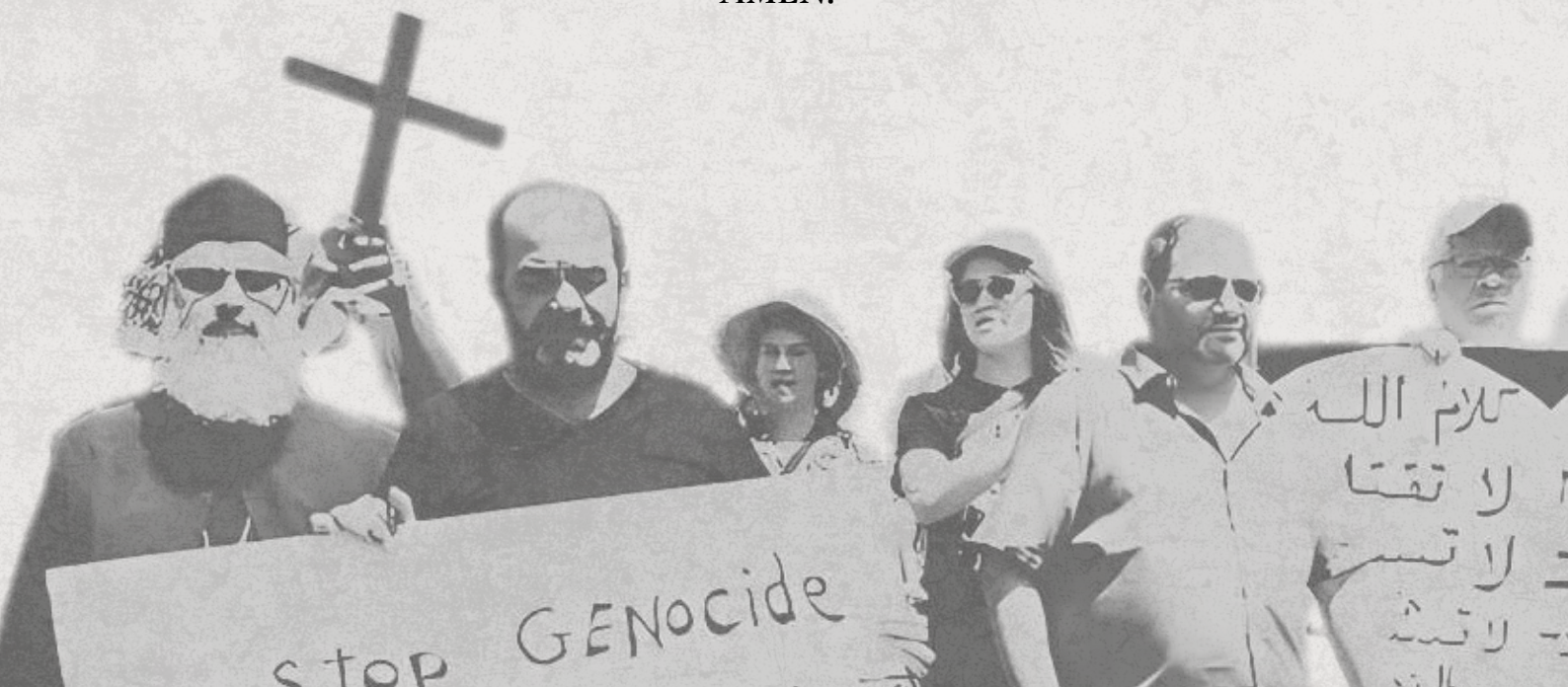
*We pray that you will lead the oppressed, those who love and protect their land
and fight for it, and that you give them strength in the face of those who want to
take away the land.*

*May Your promise come true, that the oppressed will inherit the land; that there is
light at the end of the tunnel.*

*God of Justice, when we look at the Al-Makhrou and Bethlehem area, we draw
inspiration and strength from another promise of yours; that the day will come
when justice flows like a mighty river.*

*We come to You today, in our fear but also in the resilience we draw from Your
word and presence in our life.*

*May the oppressed inherit the earth and may justice flow like a might river.
AMEN.*



LIFT OUR BURDENS

Based on a prayer form Lamma Mansour

God our justice, we come to you in this darkness, hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed; because we carry your Sumud (steadfastness) in our souls.

God of resurrection, death is around, it lurks in the corner, threatens your loved ones, and the suffering feels unbearable and endless. In faith, albeit limping, we declare: You have defeated death. We believe. Help our unbelief.

God who knows sorrow, and is acquainted with the deepest grief. Hold us near while we weep, embrace us while we mourn. Help us feel your tears blend with ours, our friend who sticks closer than a brother.

God who walked this land proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Walk among the dispossessed and those deprived of their resting places. Sit with our children in their fears and confusion, spare their childhoods amid the calamity and uncertainty.

God who lifts our burdens, lift the rubble of our homes and the trembling of our hearts, with Your mighty hand bring us back to soil which we have tilled. Clear the air from the dust of demolition, infuse our land with your fragrance of salvation.

*We long for justice, we cry out for peace.
Lord, in your mercy, break into this darkness with your light*



A WORD ON GRIEF

Kelly Hayes,

“Grief is the ultimate interruption to the normalisation of violence because in grief, we acknowledge the value of life as we do in no other scenario.

*I know that many of us are grieving a great deal in these times,
and that our grief can at times feel all-consuming.*

*Grief can cause us to shut down, retreat, or turn inward,
but I want to remind us that there is power in grief.
Because grief refuses the normalisation of violence and loss.*

Our grief is a rejection of dehumanisation.

By grieving what is happening in Palestine, we are refusing to devalue the lives of those we have lost, and we are refusing to become less human ourselves. We are refusing to sacrifice the parts of ourselves that are soft and permeable enough to facilitate human connection and mutual recognition.

In our grief, there is hope for humanity, because in our grief, love and decency persist in the face of injustice.

May our hearts continue to break outward into action and expressions of love and solidarity until the Kisiya’s land is restored, Al-Makhrouf is safe and all of Palestine is free.



A PRAYER FOR THIEVES

Steve Schallert

TO THOSE WHO STEAL

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

TO THOSE WHO PRACTICE VIOLENCE

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

TO THOSE WHO DISPOSSESS

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

TO THOSE WHO FUND THIS MADNESS

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

TO THOSE WHO ARBITRATE "JUSTICE"

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

TO THOSE CONSCRIPTED, THE HOLDERS OF THE GUNS

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation

*May you heal from all the trauma you carry, the hatred you've inherited,
the bitterness which blinds you ... hate is such a burden to carry.*

We see your hardened hearts and pray for your salvation



VICTORY OVER OCCUPATION

Naim Ateek

*IN THESE DAYS OF PERSECUTION
TOGETHER WE DECLARE OVER ML-MAKHROUR:*

Victory of light over the darkness of occupation

Victory of love over hate

Victory of justice over oppression

Victory of compassion over hard-ness and callousness of heart

Victory of hope over despair

Victory of peace over conflict and war

Victory of reconciliation and forgiveness over revenge and vengeance

Victory of nonviolence over violence

Victory of peace, security, and wellbeing over chaos, insecurity, and fear

Lord, let it be



RETURN

David Aharon

*From the depths I called to You (Psalms 130:1)
You seem so silent in our time of dire need.*

*Then you answered: Return to me and I will return to you (Malachi 3:7)
Leave your violent and arrogant ways and return to me.
Only then will I return to you.*

*But we answered: Bring us back to you and then we will return.
(Lamentations 5:21) Show us the way.*

*We are tired of the diasporas and the oppression, but the innocent cannot suffer
for our liberation. That is not liberation.
No one is free until we are all free.
Show us the Way.*

*So we decided together: We will return to each other at the right time.
Without force.*

*I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me. (Song of Solomon 6:3)
We will return together.*

*We made a deal and you made us swear: Don't you dare wake up my love before
I'm ready. (Song of Solomon 3:5)*

*Don't take the land by force.
I will bring you back when I'm ready.
Is this a conversation between a Jew and God?
Is this a conversation between a Palestinian and God?
Is it between a Palestinian and a Jew?*

*I will bring you back when I'm ready. A consensual reunion for everyone who
belongs to this land. No land shall be taken by force. Justice for all. This will
happen when we are all ready.*

THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

Ya Rab As-salaami, amter Alayna salaam
Ya Rab As-salaami, imna biladna salaam

Ya Rab as-salaami, amter Alayna salaam
Ya Rab as-salaami, Imla Qalubna salaam

*(God of Justice and Peace, rain down upon us your peace
God of Justice and Peace, Let every heart be filled with peace)*

*Hear the teaching of Christ:
A new command I give you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
The peace of Christ be with you all.*

So then let us pass the peace of Christ to each other.

****pause to greet each other, meet someone new, share a hug or handshake*



