



A CALL TO ACTION TO SUPPORT DISPOSSESSED CHRISTIAN PALESTINIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

Jesus declared: "Blessed are the humble for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5).

But in the Holy Land the earth is being stolen from Palestinians, Christian and Muslim alike, throughout the Occupied West Bank.

'The humble' are those who turn away from violence, hatred and abuse and submit to the gentle rule of Jesus Christ. To 'inherit the earth' is to receive the gifts of God, in this life and the next. Jesus declares God's favour for the humble but in this life, people are expected to live justly, not taking advantage of vulnerable people.

The prophet Isaiah warned:

'Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land'. (Isaiah 5:8)

Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank are being denied their fundamental rights to live in the land which they have called home for generations. They are being dispossessed of their homes and their land. Every day new injustices are being committed, with the approval of the Israeli government, by Jewish settlers who deny any rights to the land but their own. Christian and Muslim Palestinians are being squeezed off the land, step by step, inch by inch. This offends all people of faith and goodwill who uphold a vision of justice and equity for all people. In Israel and Palestine Jews, Christians and Muslims are united in protesting the treatment Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank who are losing their land and their rights as illegal Jewish settlements and outposts are multiplying and spreading.

"Thus says the Lord: 'Execute justice in the morning, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor those who have been robbed, lest my wrath go forth like fire, and burn with none to quench it, because of your evil deeds.'" (Jeremiah 21:12)

A new and dreadful injustice has been planned and is now being executed in the beautiful Palestinian area called Al Makhroul which is part of a wider zone encompassing the village of Battir, all of which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Israel has announced that a new illegal settlement will be built called Heletz. It will destroy this area of outstanding natural beauty and will forcibly displace the people of the entire area or restrict their movement.

On July 31 this process appears to have been launched when a Christian family, the Kisiyas, were thrown off their land by settlers, backed by Israeli soldiers. Ramzi and Michelle Kisiya along with their adult children, Alice, Jihad and Sandy have now lost their 5000 sq m plot in the beautiful valley which has been their home for several generations and have the legal documents to prove it. This must be opposed and the family must be restored to what is theirs by legal right.

It is more than time for people of faith and goodwill around the world to act; those whose hearts are for justice must stand alongside those who are threatened and who may lose everything. All religions are united in calling for the protection of the vulnerable and now the cry of the Kisiya family must be heard.

The Letter of James in the New Testament tells us plainly that actions must prove good intentions: *"If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill' and yet you do not supply their need, what good is that?" (James 2:15-16)*. Yes, let us pray and may our prayers lead us to righteous actions.

Christians are especially vulnerable because their numbers are so few: less than 1% of the whole population. The valley of Al Makhroul and neighbouring Beit Jala, which is part of the greater Bethlehem area are one of the few places where Christians are concentrated. If the Kisiya family are not protected then all Christians become more vulnerable and in danger. *Imagine the day when there are no Christians left in the birthplace of Jesus Christ.*

Christians in the Holy Lands must stand together and not let families be picked off one by one.

Jews, Muslims and Christians must stand together for a vision of living in the Land alongside one another, thriving in freedom and equality.

All people of faith and people of goodwill around the world must stand together when vulnerable people are placed under threat.

The Qur'an makes the challenge plain for Muslims: "Or give food in times of famine, to an orphaned relative, or to a poor person in distress, and—above all—to be one of those who have faith and urge each other to have perseverance and urge each other to have compassion; these are the people of the right." (Al-Balad, Qur'an 90: 14 – 18).

Our campaign is peaceful, prayerful and calls on people of all faiths and goodwill to work together.

WE CALL FOR:

- *Prayer for the Kisiya family and for all people who live in fear of losing their home and their land.*
- *Unity for all the people of the Land to stand together in solidarity: 'a challenge to one is a threat to all.'*
- *Faith Leaders and community leaders everywhere to raise their voice for justice in creative actions and to hold the government of Israel to account.*
- *Individuals and communities everywhere to halt the funding of the JNF (Jewish National Fund) which persistently funds settler land-theft in Al-Makhroul and beyond.*

The Kisiya family are defiant. They are humble because they will not use violence and they seek justice. They are strong and remain steadfast.

ALICE KISIYA SAID:

"We have been fighting for over twenty years. We are exhausted, both financially and emotionally but we will not surrender. Our goal is to reclaim what is rightfully ours."

Let us join together to help them reclaim what is rightfully theirs and embody solidarity with all who are threatened in the Land in unity of care and purpose.

Sincerely,

Save Al-Makhroul &
Friend of Al-Makhroul



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MEDIA & SHORTENED STATEMENT

Israel has recently announced the development of a new illegal settlement, dubbed Heletz, to be built upon the historic Palestinian area called Al-Makhroun, part of a wider zone encompassing the village of Battir, all of which has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This planned act of collective land theft will destroy this area of outstanding natural beauty and forcibly displace, or radically restrict the right of movement, to one of the last Christian village in Bethlehem.

On July 31, 2024 this process appears to have begun when a Christian family, the Kisiyas, were thrown off their land by settlers under the support of Israeli soldiers. Ramzi and Michelle Kisiya along with their adult children, Alice, Jihad and Sandy have now lost their 5000 sq meter plot which has been their home for several generations. Despite having the legal documents to prove their ownership they continue to struggle to return. Since their displacement and ongoing resistance a global interfaith solidarity movement has emerged to support the Kisiya family and the whole Al-Makhroun valley in their fight against erasure and theft called "Save Al-Makhroun." Committed to nonviolence, interfaith-unity and human-rights, Save-Al Makhroun represents a global community of concerned congregations, organisations, religious alliances and individuals advocating for the Kisiya families right to return home and stands against the displacement of Palestinians in the Al-Makhroun valley.

On September 29th, Save Al-Makhroun is hosting an international - interfaith prayer vigil in solidarity with the Kasiya family. Dozens of nations and local faith organisations across the world are planing to participate. Details of local vigils, organising partners and locations can be found on the official instagram account - @savealmakhroun.

"We have been fighting for over twenty years. We are exhausted, both financially and emotionally but we will not surrender. Our goal is to reclaim what is rightfully ours." - Alice Kisiya

SAVE AL-MAKHROUR CALLS FOR:

- May individuals and communities everywhere continue in prayer and solidarity for the Kisiya family and for all people who live in fear of losing their home and their land: 'a challenge to one is a threat to all.'
- May individuals and communities everywhere offer direct support to the Kisiya family, via the ongoing [GoFundMe Campaign](#), so that their courageous resistance can continue.
- May individuals and communities everywhere halt the funding of the JNF (Jewish National Fund) which for decades has funded settler land-theft in Al-Makhroun and beyond.
- May individuals and communities everywhere raise their voice for justice in creative collective action until Al-Makhroun is safe from encroachment, the Kisiya's are allowed to return and the government of Israel is held to account for the violence perpetrated upon Al-Makhroun's indigenous residents.

Questions and media inquiries can be sent to - friendsofalmakhroun@proton.me

In Solidarity,

Save Al-Makhroun

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 @savealmakhroun



SAVE AL-MAKHROUR VIGIL

To those interested in organising local vigils in solidarity with Save Al-Makhrouur and the Kisiya Family. Please make note of the following directives so we may function in a spirit of unity and be mindful to the wishes of the Kisiya's amid their struggle for justice.

Mass Mobilisation, Sep 29th -

Our goal is to mobilise **100 public interfaith solidarity vigils** on **September 29th** for a mass showing of support for the Kisiya's and Al-Makhrouur. Yes, we welcome vigils to take place beyond the 29th and to continue globally there after, but we invite all organisers to stand uniquely together on the 29th.

Definition of 'Public Interfaith Solidarity Vigil' -

Public - When at all possible we invite organisers to host vigils in public spaces (parks, parking lots, street corners, etc) as we seek a public witness. That said, the use of places of worship or community halls are also acceptable alternatives.

Interfaith - Save Al-Makhrouur is fundamentally interfaith and recognises the meaningful contributions of all faith traditions to the pursuit of justice. Organisers should work in tandem with a cross section of faith leaders and communities so that vigils can express a broad range of traditions in a welcoming and inclusive way. Our focus is on justice for displaced Palestinians, and all who share the faithful hope for justice to come are welcome to lead and participate. **Vigils are NOT places of proselytization and individuals or communities which can not commit to holding non-coercive space should refrain from participation.*

Solidarity - This movement is being led by Palestinian Christians and the Kisiya Family who bear the most risk and in their resistance to displacement. As organisers we posture ourselves under their leadership and wisdom and as they fight for their right to return. Solidarity in this regard means deferment to their leadership and wishes ... ie we allow the Kisiya's to define for themselves what "support" looks like.

Vigil - A "vigil" is defined as a "period of keeping 'wake' when one is normally asleep, especially to keep watch in prayer." Amid the ongoing forced erasure of our Palestinian Christian neighbours, we refuse to close our eyes to injustice and the suffering of our siblings. So we will keep watch together until justice comes.



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SEP 29 ORGANISING DIRECTIVES

- Please register your vigil on the following form - <https://forms.gle/Rz4t2AWDahsgPQTr7> - so your vigil can be added to posts and so we have a collective database of participation.
- Each vigil will be provided with a collection of prayers, poems and a statement from the Kisiya family. *We ask ALL vigils to begin their gatherings with these materials* and then are free to develop their local programs however they like, keeping the culture of Save-Al Makhroun in focus.
- *The Bethlehem Vigil*, which Alice Kisiya is forming, *will take place at 6:00pm (GMT+3)*. When at all possible we invite local organisers to try and sync up their timing, but you are free to time your vigil whenever is most strategic locally. *If* you are able to sync up and have the capacity to live stream your vigil please connect with Steve Schallert.
- Media & public statements are provided in the tool-kit, please help us keep our global messaging united by making use of them when informing local media of your gathering.
- *We encourage a broad interfaith leadership for the facilitation of your local vigil when possible*. This is a moment of collective solidarity and an opportunity for local interfaith peacebuilding and unity. Prayers and scripture from all traditions are welcomed and encouraged.
- The use of overt nationalistic/political imagery in this occasion is cautioned by the Kisiya Family as they face the threat of arrest on the regular. *We do ask that candles, our official slogans and the use of Save Al-Makhroun imagery be prioritised*. We give the leadership of each location the freedom to choose to include Palestinian flags under their own wisdom and context. Keffiyeh's and cultural garb is always welcome.
- *Each vigil needs to have dedicated film/photographers documenting their vigil, particularly during the readings of the "official" materials*. Short interviews with leaders and participants are also welcome. Links will be provided to you so your media can be sent to our media team. *We intend to develop a documentary of the day to help continue to raise awareness of the struggle*.
- Please encourage all participants to tag or invite our primary IG account (@savealmakhroun) in all postings and use the hashtag #savealmakhroun at all times.

- OUR COLLECTIVE DEMANDS AND CALLS TO ACTION -

- May individuals and communities everywhere continue in prayer and solidarity for the Kisiya family and for all people who live in fear of losing their home and their land: 'a challenge to one is a threat to all.'
- May individuals and communities everywhere offer direct support to the Kisiya family, via the ongoing [GoFundMe Campaign](#), so that their courageous resistance can continue.
- May individuals and communities everywhere halt the funding of the JNF (Jewish National Fund) which for decades has funded settler land-theft in Al-Makhroun and beyond.
- May individuals and communities everywhere raise their voice for justice in creative collective action until Al-Makhroun is safe from encroachment, the Kisiya's are allowed to return and the government of Israel is held to account for the violence perpetrated upon Al-Makhroun's indigenous residents.

SAVE AL-MAKHROUR



INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY PRAYER VIGIL: STANDING WITH THE KISIYA FAMILY AND THE PEOPLE OF AL-MAKHROUR:

WHAT:

On *September 29th*, we will be joining a Global interfaith solidarity prayer vigil to stand with the Kisiya family and all people of Al-Makhrou, who are facing the threat of displacement and land confiscation due to the establishment of a new Israeli settlement. This settlement is one of four new settlements recently announced by the government and is part of a larger pattern of aggression and erasure in the West Bank. The Kisiya family, who have lived in Al-Makhrou for generations, are fighting to protect their land, their homes, and their way of life.

WHY:

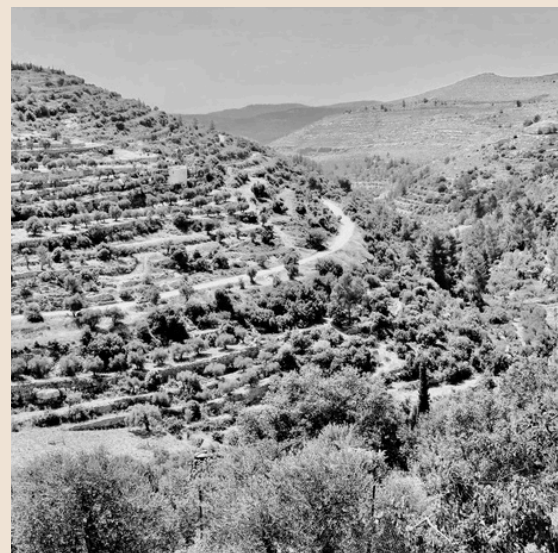
We stand with the Kisiya family and the people of Al-Makhrou because we believe in the sacredness of all human life and the importance of justice, equality, and human dignity. As Jesus taught us, *"Blessed are the humble, for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). The Quran also reminds us, *"give food in times of famine, to an orphaned relative, or to a poor person in distress - and, above all - to be one of those who have faith and urge each other to have perseverance and urge each other to have compassion; these are the people of the right"* (Al-Balad, Quran 90:14-18). We recognize that the struggle of the Kisiya family is not just about their land, but about the fundamental right to live in peace and security. As people of faith, we are called to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized and oppressed, and to work towards a world where all people can live in freedom and dignity. The prophet Isaiah warns us, *"Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land"* (Isaiah 5:8). We must heed this warning and stand against the injustice of land confiscation and displacement.

HOW:

We invite you to join thousands across the world in hosting an interfaith prayer vigil on September 29th either in public or in your place of worship - community centre. This collective action seeks to centre and amplify the voices of the Kisiya family, the people of Al-Makhrou and their ongoing struggle.

We ask also that you share this information with regional faith communities and network, encouraging them to join this movement and familiarise themselves with the persecution of Palestinians in the West Bank. Your leadership and voice can help make a difference in the lives of the Kisiya family and the people of Al-Makhrou.

Save Al-Makhrou &
Friends of Al-Makhrou



The Al-Makhrou Valley is located about 7km west of Bethlehem, Christ's birthplace.



The Kisiya family have diligently campaigned for years to protect their family land and now open up their efforts to all of the Al-Makhrou Valley



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SAVE AL-MAKHROUR



A BRIEF HISTORY OF AL-MAKHROUR

The Al Makhroul Valley, located in the West Bank near the town of Battir, holds significant historical and cultural importance for Palestinians. This picturesque valley, with its terraced agricultural fields and traditional stone farming structures, has been a vital agricultural area for centuries. Its significance extends beyond its economic value; it represents a deep connection to Palestinian heritage and identity.

Historically, the Al Makhroul Valley has been crucial for local agriculture, particularly for growing olives, grapes, and other crops that are central to Palestinian diet and economy. The terraced fields, a traditional method of farming, have been carefully maintained by generations of Palestinian farmers, showcasing a sustainable and time-honored approach to agriculture that is deeply intertwined with the land's history.

In contemporary times, the region's agricultural landscape faces threats from ongoing settlement expansion and land confiscations. Efforts to preserve and protect the Al Makhroul Valley are emblematic of the broader struggle to safeguard Palestinian lands and heritage. Initiatives to maintain the valley's traditional farming practices and resist encroachments reflect a broader commitment to preserving Palestinian identity and historical continuity in the face of political and environmental challenges.



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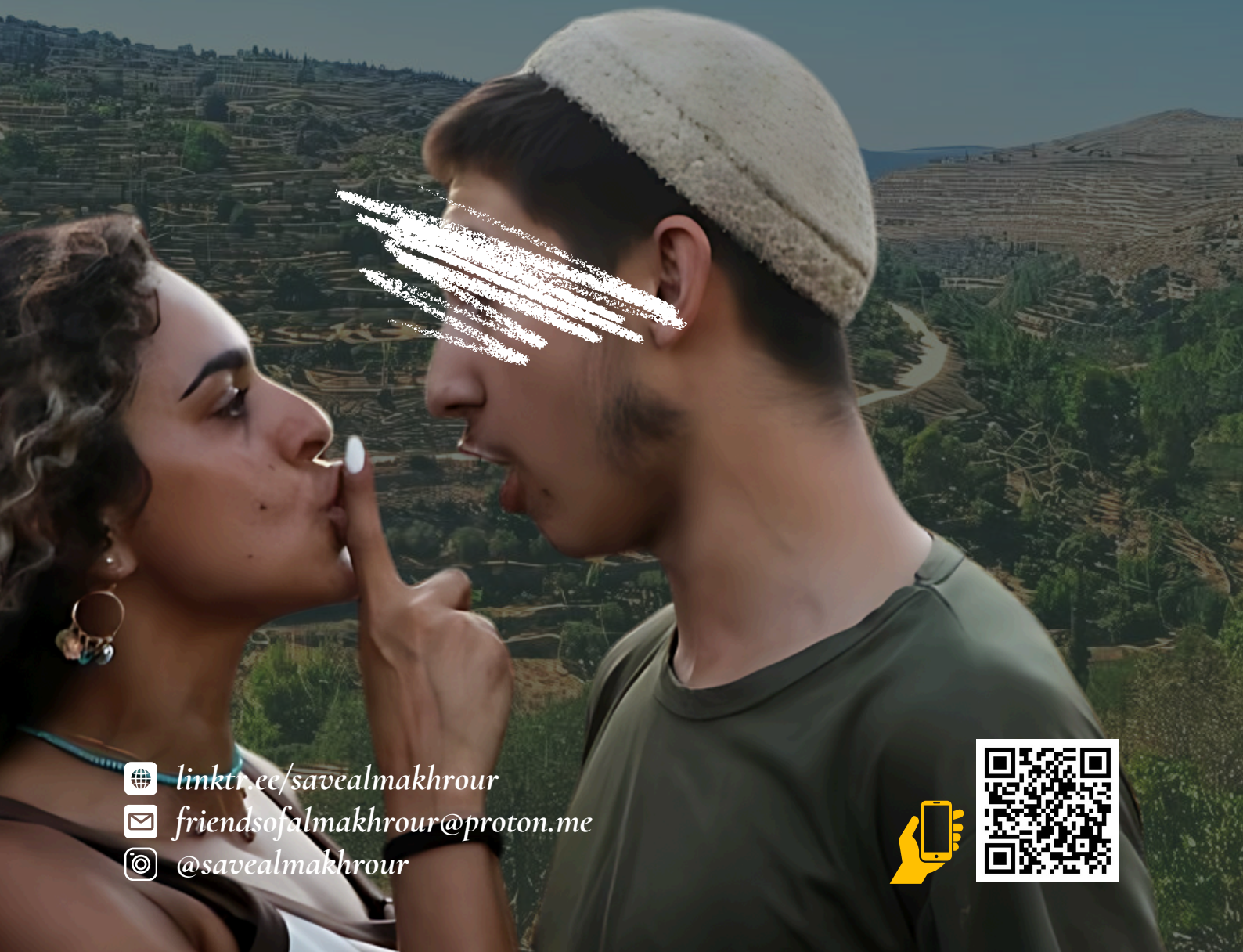
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SAVE AL-MAKHROUR

ON **SEPTEMBER 29TH** WE SAY NO MORE
TO LAND THEFT IN AL-MAKHROUR!

JOIN / HOST AN INTERFAITH PUBLIC PRAYER VIGIL IN SOLIDARITY WITH
THE KISIYA FAMILY AND ALL THOSE THREATENED BY DISPOSSESSION.

FOLLOW **@SAVEALMAKHROUR** FOR MORE INFORMATION.



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SAVE 
AL-MAKHROUR



JOIN US FOR AN INTERFAITH PRAYER VIGIL FOR AL-MAKHROUR & THE KISIYA FAMILY

DATE:

TIME:

LOCATION:

DETAILS:

