



This interview is offered as supplemental material to the publication, *Listen to the Children: Justice Worship Resource with Reference to Epiphany Year A* (2019).

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## ***George Talgieh Interview*** ***July 2019***

- 1. Interviewer's Name:** Lucy Talgieh
- 2. Child's Name:** George Talgieh
- 3. Child's Age:** 17
- 4. Child's Relationship to KAIROS:** attends the Wi'am Center, a KAIROS partner with the Women, Peace and Security program
- 5. Can you tell us a little bit about who you are or introduce yourself?**

My name is George Talgieh. I am a Palestinian Christian born, living in Bethlehem. I am the youngest child in my family; we are two boys and two girls.

I was born with glaucoma. I lost my sight at the age of 4. After that my family had to change my school from a regular school to special needs school in order for me to learn the Braille system. It was one of the difficult moments in my life - to change schools after I started to have friends. The principal of Terra Sancta College promised to let me back into that school. Just to make the story shorter, I am back to regular school; this year is my last year. I am in the 12th grade.

The worst part of losing my eyesight was not being able to read and study, which I used to enjoy very much. Although I was devastated at first, I became more determined to study harder and to achieve my dream.

I am happy that I will finish my schooling this year, but I also feel I am at a crossroads: where to continue my studies, which university, and where? It's really hard to decide especially in this country - it's not well equipped to facilitate life with disabilities.

I consider myself a lucky person to be born into a family that always supports me, despite that our economic situation is really bad. My dad and mom always provide me with what I need especially for my music education. I am in my second year of playing an instrument called "QANOUN" or Zitar in English. Also, I am a poet; that gift my Aunt Lucy helped me to discover during the Women's International Day. Each March I wrote a poem for that day and since then I became a poet. Right now, I am working on my book which will come out in 2020; it will be called *Bethlehem, the Capital of the Arab Culture*.

Despite that I don't see, I love to watch football games with my brother.

- 6. What does "peace" mean to you? What does "freedom" mean to you? What does it mean to be safe?**

Peace: the word peace is different for each one of us who lack it and are looking for it. As Palestinians our goal in life is to reach peace. We are always trying to find it in the face of the others.

Peace is to respect human rights; all the international conventions mention it.  
Peace is the greatest way of love in the world, which includes tolerance, forgiveness.  
As a Palestinian I believe that peace will prevail on earth one day.

**7. What do you as a youth need for the above to happen?**

I want Israel to consider us as Human beings, and to deal with us as Human. Also, if there is love, there is peace and there is a lack of love, and tolerance. Israel needs to accept us in order to live in peace. We need to work together hand in hand to reach peace. I want to live in my country Palestine without any restriction of movement, without fear, without thinking of what tomorrow will bring, whether it is more violence, or more acceptance, freedom of worshipping.

**8. You know what kind of work we at Wi'am do, right? Why is this work important?**

It's really important for me what Wi'am does, because they work with the community, children, family and youth which I am part of. Through their program, they equipped us with skills, which help us in our life to overcome challenges, difficulties. Also, the nonviolence program that Wi'am has is really important for both societies.

Most important for me, they helped me to reframe my character. I used to be shy, hesitant, and unable to express myself. Through the safe environment that Wi'am offers us, I got to know people, and have friends.

**9. Children are supposed to have the freedom to play, to choose their own friends, and to express themselves. Does that always happen? Why or why not?**

Freedom to play, is something that we are missing in Palestine This is due to the occupation. I remember how we used to go to play at the Wi'am playground. Once during the summer camp, soldiers started to shower us with skunk water, or shooting tear gas. Also, in Palestine we lack parks. In the Bethlehem area we have only a few and sometimes they are far from our neighborhood. You can see most of the kids playing in the street. We have around 400 kids in prison. Children are supposed to play, not to be in prison.

**10. What is your message for children in Canada**

I'm sorry to say that the world is not listening, watching, or caring about us as Palestinians and Canada is one of those countries that isn't paying attention to us as Palestinians. We have faith in you and your family, that you will be an instrument to work towards justice and peace. My message to you is: Come and meet us. We are human like you. You would enjoy our food and hospitality and most importantly you will make friends.