

## O BROKEN TOWN OF BETHLEHEM



Christian Aid/Abbie Trayler-Smith

In the broken town of Bethlehem today, hope is in short supply.

Right across Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories many children, caught in the literal and emotional cross-fire of the conflict, have lived a childhood of pain and fear. Rockets; military attacks; suicide bombers and blockades – wherever they come from – all lead to fear, injury, bereavement and poverty.

For Palestinian children living in impoverished, occupied areas, the struggle can be extreme. Christian Aid's partner the YMCA works in Bethlehem and provides help to those affected by injury and trauma across the West Bank. Fatin Al Shoppi works for them. She says, 'There are no children here who have not seen or heard about violence as a daily fact of life.'

### NOOR RABIA'S STRUGGLE

**Noor Rabia (17)**, pictured left, is one of these children and his family are very poor.

Three years ago he picked up an unusual looking object in the narrow lanes of the refugee camp where he lives. It turned out to be an abandoned explosive device. Noor's body was hit by shrapnel and he lost his right hand.

This incident had a devastating effect. He dropped out of school, didn't want to see his friends and retreated into himself. He felt ashamed and depressed. His family were too poor to get him physical or emotional help. He says, 'I had lost all hope in life. I hated this life.'

### THE LONG JOURNEY BACK TO HOPE

Noor and his family were offered help by Christian Aid partner organisation the YMCA.

Fatin Al Shoppi has been Noor's counsellor for three years, helping him to process the trauma, imagine a different future, and to purchase a prosthetic hand. She says, 'When he got his new hand, it changed his life.' He is studying hard now so that he can work with computers, as his injury means he can't work on the land.

Noor's mother, Sara, is really grateful for the work of the YMCA. 'Noor has returned to school, goes out with his friends more and is more peaceful.'

For Noor, everything has changed. 'Fatin made me see that I have more life to live – more hope.'

### OUR HOPE FOR THIS CHRISTMAS

Christian Aid's partners throughout Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories are working tirelessly with children, and adults,

who are struggling to overcome poverty caused by the conflict. Christian Aid advocates that a viable and sustainable peace is essential to bring the security that both Israelis and Palestinians so desperately need.

This Christmas, we must take a journey back to hope. Many people have been tempted to give up on Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories as too complicated. But Christian Aid does not believe giving up is an option anywhere where people are affected by injustice. We believe that poverty can and must end – everywhere – and your generous support for our partners in Bethlehem, and around the world, will enable us to keep going until it does.

### SUPPORT OUR CHRISTMAS APPEAL

**£8.50/ €10** could pay for one traumatised child to attend a group art-therapy session.

**£25/ €29** could provide a day's vocational training for a disabled person, teaching them olive-wood carving as a trade. (Also available as *Carving out a future*, a Bethlehem-themed gift in Christian Aid's virtual gift catalogue, *Present Aid*.)



**£55/ €64** could fund counselling for a child for two days.

Ask your minister or church representative for a **Gift envelope** or visit [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie) to make a **donation online** or order the *Present Aid* Bethlehem gift for friends and family members.



Christian Aid/Simon Townsley

An update on Jessica, the focus of our 2004 Christmas appeal, is available in the background information at [www.christianaid.ie](http://www.christianaid.ie)

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives.

Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

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