

A Religious Vision for Sumud

Interviews with Christian and Moslem leaders in the Bethlehem area



*Culture and Palestine Series
Arab Educational Institute
Bethlehem*

Photo cover: Sheikh Abdel Majeed Al Amarna, the Mufti of Bethlehem, and father Rami Asakrieh, Parish Priest of the Latin church in Bethlehem, joined AEI staff in December 2020 in decorating the Christmas tree with balls showing *sumud* values.

This publication is supported by KACIID in the context of the project: "A Christian-Islamic Religious Vision on the Concept of Sumud in Times of the Covid-19 Crisis."



KAICIID DIALOGUE CENTRE



Culture and Palestine Series
Arab Educational Institute
2021 Bethlehem, Palestine

Preface

This e-magazine consists of a series of interviews about the concept of *sumud* held with local Moslem and Christian leaders from the Bethlehem area in the occupied West Bank. Sumud – Arabic for steadfastness or resilience – is among Palestinians a well-known national concept.

Once a Bethlehem teacher said that “the Holy Land which I love is a land of testing.” This expression neatly encapsulates the two main dimensions of sumud’s meaning.

On the one hand, the concept is about people’s attachment to a particular *place* – the Holy Land, the homeland of Palestine, or taken in smaller circles, one’s hometown, village, neighborhood and even one’s own house and home. In this meaning related to place, sumud expresses the will to stay on the land and in the homeland as individual persons as well as viable communities.

Of course such steadfastness requires many preconditions. To name a few main ones: a viable economy, keeping the society cohesive, education about and developing the land, and respect for diversity, also respect for the different religions present. In the Palestinian situation, all these preconditions are today under heavy pressure given the political fragmentation of the society and the harsh social and economic conditions that exist in the West Bank, certainly during the year 2020, in the time of corona.

On the other hand, sumud relates to *time*. The concept is also about patience, perseverance and hope. Sumud is about staying committed, as individuals and as communities, to one’s principles, goals and rights over a longer period of time, whatever the odds.

The present interviews, conducted by AEI’s co-president Fuad Giacaman, asks the interviewees to relay their own personal experiences along with their understandings of sumud in its broader meanings. In the interviews, sumud becomes a comprehensive concept with human, political, religious, inter-religious and educational dimensions. As Moslem and Christian leaders, the interviewees elaborate on the meanings of sumud or comparable concepts found in the holy texts of Christianity and Islam. They focus on educational applications of sumud.

The interviews are used to enhance AEI’s *Citizenship and Diversity: Christian-Moslem Living Together* program, which aims at fostering (inter-)religious Moslem-Christian religious education in and out of schools in the Bethlehem and Ramallah regions.

AEI is grateful for the support of KAICIID which made this series of interviews and publication possible.

*Arab Educational Institute
Bethlehem, January 2021*

Interviews

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Munther Isaac

“We felt that we were heading towards a culture of isolation and non-interaction.”



Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac is academic dean at the Bethlehem Bible College, Christ at the Checkpoint Conference Director, a speaker on Palestinian theology and the theology of the land, active with Kairos Palestine, and a blogger.

What does "sumud" mean to you?

As a Christian and Palestinian, steadfastness has to do with striking roots in this land and with my connection to it. It is about discovering and living this connection. On the Christian side, my connection to this land has many dimensions. On the one hand, this land is the land of the Bible and the land of Christ. On the other hand, this connection is about obeying the commandment to love one's neighbor - "love your neighbor as thyself." I love my land, I love my country, I love my community, and this love is not permitted to be superficial or self-interested. It is a true and deep-rooted love linked to the causes of Palestinianism, Arabism, and Islam. All these are part of loving your neighbor as thyself. As we know, love sometimes challenges misconceptions in the society. Sumud is the discovery of my roots, living this rootedness in this land, and living the will to love one's neighbor in all its aspects. This all is part of my Christianity.

Have you met a special experience which told you the meaning of sumud?

For me as a person who is not easily satisfied, it is always an option to become angry and leave. It is easy because I have certificates and my writings that help in finding a job outside Palestine. I was offered several jobs. Some might argue that a Christian is a Christian anywhere. He can live his faith anywhere. But this was a test for me. I believe that staying on the land is our mission, and our presence on this piece of earth is important. God has a purpose for us on this earth. This is my experience in life: to believe in God's call that I live in this country. I chose to stay in this country. For me, my staying here is not just a matter of loyalty to our people but part of my faith, mission and testimony. I link sumud to testimony. Christ taught us to be the salt of the earth, so that this salt will dissolve and take root, and be part of society and add color and taste to it. For us as a Church, this is our call as I see it, to join this society and have a positive impact, without dominating or turning religion into a means of sovereignty. The rivalry between religions at this time is killing us. We do not want to live such a mentality. We as Christians want to promote a mentality of influencing, not dominating.

Is steadfastness a Palestinian term, or is it humanitarian, political, religious? Or educational? Why?

Man has multiple identities, and we cannot separate these human identities. I am a Christian, Palestinian and Lutheran at the same time. All these identities are at an equal level. The educational dimension is very important since schools shape the human being more than anything else. We talk about 12 years at school. The time at school is an important stage in life that shapes human thought and identity. Our religious [Islamic] brothers are not only present in the curriculum. The very presence of a Muslim and Christian student together in a religious education class is a message which has an impact by itself. So, yes, every person must cherish his or her religious identity and understand his or her faith. However, this does not mean that that person should not be close to the neighbor and to the possibility of living together rather than separately. The message we give to our children and youth is that we should study together and play together in class and be jointly part of the national struggle. However, the religious identity is everyone's alone. From that viewpoint the religious identity can be seen as separate from the other aspects.

Does each of us have a certain way to demonstrate sumud? How?

Each individual, institution and group demonstrates sumud in a different way. For example, a musician who plays Arab Palestinian music and poetry in which we salute our ancestors, our customs and our heritage, takes part in sumud. The strengthening of the Palestinian identity by the historian in the history books is an expression of sumud. When churches affirm the Christian presence as a component of the Palestinian identity, it is part of sumud. We do not want to prove our Christian sumud as if we oppose the other religion. Rather, we adhere to our land and our churches and preserve them in this land. In light of Israel's attempt to impose its identity on us and on our history and the existing plurality, each of us is responsible for highlighting and demonstrating his own style without excluding other identities, including the Jewish religion. We are all called to highlight our roots and revive our heritage and history in all its aspects within a system of one inclusive identity for all the inhabitants of this land, which is the land of Palestine, rather than transforming it into an exclusive identity.

What is the meaning of sumud in the Holy Bible and Noble Quran? What are the terms which are close to sumud?

Think of "You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth." Matthew 5 reminds us that we are the owners of a message for this land. Think also of the book of Daniel. The book of Job differs from Daniel because what happened to Job was due to more natural calamities than pressures caused by people. However, this book is in itself an example of patience, sacrifice, and perseverance. As for Daniel, he was pressured by the empire and its friends, but he stayed resisting and refusing. Both Job and Daniel were not isolated people. They knew the language and culture; had positions, and were involved in the land. They were integrated into their society. However, both did not compromise on their principles.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in Palestinian education? Why?

Certainly. The most important value is sacrifice. When I would only think about myself, my well-being and my happiness, I would search for my happiness in another place than religion and I would negotiate with my religious principles, for example, by cheating to succeed, or stealing to gain wealth, or emigrating to find success.

In education we must stress value concepts. For example, today we lose the spirit of volunteering. We do not want to give for nothing. If my values represent something greater than me - in my case God - I am ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of this thing which is God. In the past, the nation was more valuable to everyone than anything else. For Christians, the Bible speaks much about sacrifice. "No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). "What would a person benefit if he won the whole world and lost his soul?" (Matthew 16: 26).

The other element important to education is to stand firm, discover one's roots in this land and live this discovery. Today, Palestinian Christian youth are not rooted in the faith and the land. We are not really aware of our faith, neither nationally nor religiously. We are unaware of our roots, our history or our heritage. We are not aware of the church, nor the historical and religious heritage, nor our faith, nor our country. Today we do not have a religious or ecclesiastical awareness of our land, our heritage, our culture or our families.

A small anecdote: I was a while ago on a visit to somebody from the Lakhtiar family of the Lutheran Church who was at his deathbed. He was 90 years old when I visited him. He was raised in Beit Sahour and his father was a priest in the nineteen-forties and -thirties. When he found out that I am from the family of Isaac he asked me about my grandfather. He told me that before my grandfather and grandmother got married, he knew them because they went to church to pray. For me, this was a wonderful discovery knowing that my ancestors were Christian and went to church in the 1940s. This is learning on a micro level. It shows the role of our families in the church and society. This is a missing part in our history, I wish it could be revived.

Do not forget that we should be rooted in our faith. The Church must revive from the lack of faith more than providing information about the Christian faith. After 12 years of religious classes three times a week, it is assumed that the graduate student will have a true faith and a sense of belonging to the Church. When measuring the extent of its actual impact, we find however that the teaching of religious education in schools is very weak.

Is there a risk that steadfastness will be understood as the politicization of education? There are some parents and teachers who have difficulty understanding sumud because it is a term associated with politics. What is your view on the subject?

First of all, what I have said so far, and given my understanding of my faith, this all falls under a broad heading: the kingdom of heaven. I do not advocate Palestinian national values as much as I advocate religious values about fulfilling God's will in this land, which are justice, faith, love and peace. As a cleric, I believe in Christ. When I speak in conferences about the Palestinian issue, for example, I am doing this out of my faith and my personal affiliation as a Palestinian. I do not represent a political issue or a political agenda.

Rather, I am a person who believes in the call of Christ toward me, and taking part in this invitation I must address all issues of life. For me, those who say that religion should not speak about politics are, with all due respect, naive. If my faith does not help me in matters of marriage for example, how would I deal with my wife or children, or if my faith does not help me with issues of work, how would I deal with what is permitted to me as an employee and what is not? If my faith does not help me in all these aspects, there is no meaning to my faith. If my values and my belief in a concept of politics that arranges our lives in terms of respect, dignity and values, did not help me, then my faith has no value. If, for example, there is corruption in the government and I do not comment or speak out in this regard, this means that I will agree with this corruption.

Will sumud or steadfastness be useful or effective as a guiding term in religious (Islamic or Christian), civic or citizenship education? And if so, can you give us examples?

We are facing a big challenge, which is that the student views this education as a subject and a curriculum more than as religious education in the sense of an upbringing. We need to completely shake off the curriculum of religious education as it is now. When the teacher who gives this formation is not strong in faith and does not live by its principles, then how will he or she be able to establish faith among students?

The *tawjiji* lesson materials were able to cover, albeit superficially, some dimensions related to Palestinian reality. The goal should be to help the young Palestinian Christians to live their faith in Palestine in the year 2020, in light of the various interests that are part of that reality. However, our youth presently live in a virtual world dominated by the mobile phone. We need therefore to reintroduce important religious concepts.

Can the term sumud be used in multi-religious education ('living together' classes), since it is a value shared by the Christian and Islamic religions? And if so, could you give us examples.

Shared religious education classes are really a groundbreaking, important, and key experience. Since three years we have created a curriculum of having shared lessons once a month in our four Lutheran schools for all the classes, from grade 1 to 11. I was the head of the committee that wrote this curriculum, and in one of the classes we depended entirely on your curriculum [i.e. the curriculum used in the Citizenship and Diversity project]. The main reason for doing so is that you fear what you do not know. We felt that we were heading towards a culture of isolation and non-interaction with each other. Which will kill our living together. The Christian presence in this land will die and will become a mere presence of monasteries and churches if

we do not teach our youth the importance of interacting with society. The religious other too is a Palestinian person with all his religious and community affiliations. The fear of interaction between Christians and Muslims must be broken. Other religions must be understood and compared. If we, as Christians, do not do so our flame will be extinguished by our isolation from others.

Mufti Abdul Majeed Amarna: “Sumud must be visible.”

Mufti Abdul Majeed Amarna is the mufti of Bethlehem.



The mufti during an inter-religious celebration

What does sumud mean to you?

Confronting life's challenges, abiding by the right principles and not being shaken by superficial distractions.

Have you experienced a special event, whether at the level of the family or society, in which you felt the meaning of sumud?

Because we live in Palestine under an occupation that uprooted us from our cities and lands, we are forced to live in refugee camps. I am the son of Dheisheh camp. Being a refugee was the first event that I faced during my life. We went through difficult conditions within the camp including poverty and a shortage of educational opportunities. With eleven sons and daughters, my parents and family sought to educate us with all their capabilities. We all continued our education. My father used to tell us that education is our future capital, our weapon for staying steadfast in the land.

I also faced unemployment despite the educational and academic certificates I obtained in religious studies. This forced me to work in the building sector inside Israeli settlements, to provide an income. However, after a period of time, I was employed, and as a result of my perseverance at work, I was promoted from being an imam in the mosques to becoming the imam and preacher in the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, after which I was appointed Mufti of the Bethlehem Governorate. During my work in Bethlehem I faced some harassment and punishment from the occupation as a result of the social work I was doing, which focuses on working to promote religious unity between Christians and Muslims. I was subjected to investigation and imprisonment by the occupation several times only for being somebody who voices the message of unity. From this experience I learned the true meaning of *sumud*.

Is sumud a Palestinian term, or a humanitarian, political, or religious one?

Steadfastness as a single concept has many expressions, including educational, religious, political, social and other expressions that come out every day and every minute as Palestine lives its steadfastness continuously through its confrontation with the many countries that aim to usurp the Palestinian right to its land. Also, being human, we must affirm our steadfastness and humanity in an honest and positive way, and not be drawn into the violence of the

occupation which accuses the Palestinian people of being the source of violence, even though they failed to prove this time after time.

Sumud also comes in the political sense, especially in the Palestinian context. Those who are steadfast despite all the difficulties they face are victorious in preserving the land, and keeping the sanctity of the principles we believe in. As for steadfastness in its religious sense, our religion commands us to be steadfast, although the term *sumud* as such is not mentioned in the Noble Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. However, it is reflected in other terms and meanings such as commitment and patience, since steadfastness requires much patience and commitment in all fields.

Does each of us have a certain way to show our sumud? How?

Sumud must be visible. Its emphasis should be on hard work and not being lazy or relying on others. One of the most important pillars of steadfastness is that it indicates the visible and effective functioning and development of society. *Sumud* shows the cohesion of society despite the many difficulties on the ground imposed every second by the occupation.

What is the meaning of steadfastness in the Holy Quran? What are the terms in the Holy Quran close to the term steadfastness?

Firstly, in the Book of God (the Noble Qur'an) in the image of the era, the Almighty said in Sura al-'Asr (1) that there are four pillars in order for us not to be lost, which are: faith in God, doing righteous deeds, persevere and preach the truth, and the last is patience and staying alert, not to be dominated by weariness and boredom. In Surat Ali Imran - who is family of Christ, peace be upon him - the Almighty said: "O you who believe, be patient and endure and stand guard and fear Allah that you may be successful" (Surat Ali Imran, 3:200).

Doing good for the development of society is like the path of the farmer. One of the most difficult things that a person will go through is being sufficiently strong to prevent to be uprooted due to the many storms we pass.

And the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "And the Salah (prayer) is a light, and charity is a proof, and patience is illumination, and the Qur'an is a proof either for you or against you" (Hadith: 23). Prayer gives light in the darkness. Charity pays the poor, giving them more strength and fortitude. Patience adds strength and light to society in an era of darkness.

Finally, working with the rulings of the Qur'an will be a witness for you on the Day of Resurrection, as the Messenger, peace be upon him, said: "Commitment for the sake of God is better than the world and what is in it."

Can you give us some religious examples of sumud.

Keeping our prayers is important because it connects the people with God Almighty. Whatever the challenges and hostile forces that want to take away our right in this land, maintaining prayer makes us adhere to God Almighty and provides us with strength and patience on this earth, as we derive strength from God Almighty through the power of faith. And there is also the value of kinship as it appears in the cohesion of the family, and in the exchanges between family members. Preserving the family is an essential factor in preserving the society from collapse.

It is also necessary to reconcile individuals as in the Almighty's saying: "And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two" (Surat al-Hujurat, 49:9). This call is also present in the words of the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, toward the people. It is necessary to call for good and righteous deeds, as in the saying: "Let there be a group among you who call 'others' to goodness, encourage what is good, and forbid what is evil—it is they who will be successful" (Sura Ali Imran, 3:104).

There is also need to support cultivating the land, which is a great issue. Preserving the land and returning to it is like a revival of the dead, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "We drive them to a dead land and give life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness. Thus is the resurrection" (Surat Fatir, 35:9).

In addition to this we need to preserve the sanctities. Preserving them is a requirement of patience, and indicates that the homeland is ours. Also, values of *sumud* are involved in strengthening the local economy. One of the features of *sumud* is a strong and efficient economy, so that we are not dependent upon others. *Sumud* is about preserving the social fabric, as there is diversity among the cultures on this earth, and we need to preserve the fabric by respecting and accepting this diversity which creates a web of strength and harmony among different peoples.

I believe that the focus should be on the reformers. There must be in society many who work on reform to challenge those who wreak havoc on society. Reform has existed since the time of Adam and Eve and will continue until Judgment Day. We must spread the culture of brotherhood and cooperation among individuals in order to spread among the members of society friendship, brotherhood and compassion. Likewise, we need to call on religious institutions to strengthen reform committees, and send trustworthy people to strengthen this reform culture in society. This is the Prophet's call to reconcile ourselves, which is also present in the Almighty's saying: "So fear Allah and adjust all matters of difference among you, and obey Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), if you are believers" (Sura al-Anfal, 8:1).

Faith is not compatible with strife. Faith is the way of unity, forgiveness and tolerance among members of society.

Will sumud be useful or effective as a guiding term in religious (Islamic or Christian) or citizenship education? Can you give examples?

There are many examples mentioned in the Holy Quran, especially in the stories of the prophets who were exposed to many trials and problems and were able to overcome them with steadfastness, such as the story of Joseph, peace be upon him, who was subject to a conspiracy of his brothers and was sold to Egypt. Then there was an attempt to seduce him by a woman who was close. Then he entered prison and left it, and became vizier of Egypt. He then had a meeting with his brothers and pardoned them.

The stories of the prophets are examples of *sumud* in the face of challenges and temptations. There are many stories that religious education can use to talk about *sumud*, connectedness and other values of steadfastness. There is also the Prophet's biography which is full of steadfast stories of the Prophet Muhammad (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) at the beginning of his propagation of Islam, and also when the tribes were moving to Medina, and how he managed to change the atheist pagan into a person who believes in God by meeting bad treatment with good treatment. The Companions in their turn taught his teachings and spread it among them and the enemies in order to spread Islam. This led to the change of the surrounding society and its unification in one body based on the words of the Almighty: "Good and evil are not equal. Repel (*evil*) with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with him will turn as if he were a close friend" (Surah Fussilat, 41:34).

It is also imperative to strengthen teachers, educate them, and give them courses to enhance their *sumud* and keep pace with the changes taking place around them. Cooperation between private and government institutions in various fields is also necessary to produce a program on *sumud* and introduce it at schools, universities and kindergartens.

Antoun Nassar

“As a Palestinian Christian, I must keep persevering and not give up my presence on this land.”



Deacon Antoun Nassar is Director of the Dar Al Kalima School in Bethlehem.

What does sumud mean to you?

Sumud stands for a strong will, determination, steadfastness, not surrendering. These terms indicate that I stay loyal to my land and my country, to my school, or wherever I am.

Sumud indicates existence and survival. We

must be rooted in the land like an olive tree, like a tree the roots of which are strong and deep in the ground, and which give strength to the branches.

Have you met a special experience, whether at the level of the family or society, which showed you the meaning of sumud?

We as Palestinian people have faced many obstacles and much suffering for more than 70 years due to the occupation. On the personal level I believe that my presence in the church and at school is a form of sumud. Sumud is about all what we went through during the first and second intifada and that made us reach a stage of despair. Sumud is like when a person is passing a dark tunnel in which there are many challenges and difficulties but at the end of this tunnel he will find hope. After every battle there is hope.

At the family level we went through difficult circumstances as a result of the occupation and its policies. In 1991, the occupation threatened us with documents that demanded us to evacuate our land, but we stood firm and steadfast in our land and homeland for thirty years despite the harassment by settlers and occupation forces. About 5 years ago, we planted our ten acres of land with lots of fruit trees. My brothers and I planted them and we got tired from doing so. In the end we started to eat the fruits. One day, the occupation came to uproot those trees and bury them. But on the second day, my brothers and I began to replant the land again, with many times the number of tree saplings that had been planted previously, in response to what the occupation had done. We are clinging to our land because it is our right and we will not abandon it. Our Christian faith and our persistence help us to stay grounded. This is the strongest experience of sumud I met in my life.

Does sumud depend on the concept of sacrifice, or can it express joy?

Sumud generates strength and leads to joy, but true sumud requires sacrifice. If I stay sumud in my home, my land, and my country, I must suffer from many inconveniences that make me sometimes lose hope. The events that we have lived in this land and that we are still living as Palestinians, as Palestinian Christians in particular, represent sumud with sacrifice. If I want to stand up I have to sacrifice, meaning I will pay the price for my sumud. However, at the end of this ordeal and sacrifice I must find joy and hope. Without hope, there is no life, and without hope in my work, I would not be able to continue my educational career in school, and I would also not be able to stay on my land. I also link hope to faith: if you lose hope, you lose faith.

As a family we suffered for 30 years, but despite suffering we have joy, and this joy stems from inner peace. We were brought up in a Christian family that taught us how to live an inner peace and a peace with one another so that we can have joy. Peace begets joy.

The Palestinian people went through difficult historical stages that began with the Balfour Declaration followed by the Nakba, then the setback after that, the first and second intifadas up to the present day, and all these stages required sacrifice. There can be no sumud without sacrifice. I lived the experience of sumud and sacrifice through the experience of preserving our land against confiscation. We sacrificed a lot in health, efforts and money in order to endure and stay loyal to this country.

Is steadfastness a Palestinian term, humanitarian, political, or religious? Why?

Sumud may have both a political and religious meaning. When I speak about religious sumud, I mean adhering to my faith and my roots in this Holy Land in which we grew up. The words of Christ in the Holy Book strengthen our sumud. But I see it as a Palestinian term as well, because of the 70+-year long experience of the Palestinian people with the occupation.

What is the meaning of steadfastness in the Bible? What are the terms found in the Bible close to the term steadfastness?

I always contemplate the life of Christ and his ministry while he was on this earth through the Holy Bible. He came to this earth and challenged all the circumstances he faced, and he persevered. Christ is therefore the greatest example of steadfastness. Though he said, "Let this cup be taken from me," he was willing to suffer on the cross. He sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind. If there was no resurrection after his death, our life would have ended and we would be drowning in sin. We look to Christ as the source of strength and hope in our lives while facing difficulties and tribulations. We can also see sumud in the Apostle Paul, who said: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Therefore, if I do not have true faith in Christ, I will not be able to stand fast in my home, my land, my school, or anywhere.

We also have the sumud of the disciples of Christ. When they captured Jesus and took him to crucifixion, they were sad and hopeless. Jesus had lived with them on earth for three years. When Jesus departed, it was as if they no longer existed. They were afraid. But when Christ

asked them to stay in the upper room and appeared to them and encouraged them, all pain they had experienced ended with this vision of Christ. The resurrection of Christ from the dead transformed sacrifice and pain into hope. Jesus gave us courage and sumud: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine."

God will not give us the spirit of failure. There is a very beautiful woman, Mary, who always encourages us to say: God, give us strength, victory, patience and steadfastness. Where I see steadfastness in our Christian faith is in the story of the Apostle Paul, who is considered the dean of the Christian faith, during a period of his life that he was imprisoned, bound, tormented and suffering greatly. Despite all that he was patient, endured and persevered in his faith. The words of the Bible and the words of Christ strengthen me, comfort me, confirm me, and teach me how to walk in my life. I cannot achieve my goals in life without going through moments of weakness and pain until I reach my goal.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in the Palestinian education? Why?

From an educational standpoint, I believe that it is very important to have education about sumud, not just in education but by showing how to live this sumud, and how our children, grandchildren and future generations can stand up in this land and stay connected to their religion. I could give an example of such education on a personal level, as I worked on a program aimed at implanting the values of love, peace, justice, teamwork and hope in addition to sumud among the students of the school where I work. Consequently, I believe that every human being in a position of responsibility must work to promote these moral values among individuals. In order for them to apply them in their lives, and not to sloganize them, there must be a sense of inner conviction about their importance.

Is there a risk that sumud will be understood as the politicization of education? There are some parents and teachers who have difficulty understanding sumud because it is a term associated with politics.

As a Palestinian people, we lived and were brought up on this land passing through obstacles and difficult circumstances. Therefore, we cannot be far from politics. This is part of our lived reality from which we cannot separate ourselves. We sacrificed a lot for the sake of our sumud in this country. Palestine is a symbol of sumud and sacrifice. In order for freedom and independence to be achieved in Palestine, we must persevere.

On the family level, I saw that sumud is resistance. I can resist with love, with the pen, or through peaceful works, because Jesus Christ taught us to be forgiving but not to remain silent about our rights at the same time. If we see injustice and remain silent about it, we do not deserve to be Christians. Rather we must fight this injustice, peacefully. As a Palestinian Christian, I must keep persevering and not give up my presence on this land.

Will sumud be useful or effective as a guiding term in religious (Islamic or Christian), civic and citizenship education?

I worked for more than 15 years in the field of the Palestinian curriculum, especially in the Christian education curriculum. Ten years ago we established an Ecumenical Assembly made up of all Christian denominations in Palestine, and we began laying out a plan for how to develop the Christian education curricula and train Christian education teachers. We wanted to be an ecumenical committee instead of representing a single denomination only. When we served in preparing the educational curricula, we were not as a committee looking at our sectarian affiliations, but rather at our common Christian faith. We left the circle of sectarianism which led us to the path of unity.

Let me talk about the Christian education curriculum for the twelfth secondary school year, the tawjihi year. When we decided to include this curriculum for the twelfth grade, we faced a lot of criticism, including the question: "Do you want to overload our students with more subjects?" "Is it reasonable for students to memorize religion like any other subject?" However, our main goal was trying to assert the Christian presence and its roots in Palestinian history. Through this new curriculum we focused on how to live and apply Christian teachings, in addition to focusing on the Christian Palestinian identity, although this issue faced criticism as for the linking of the national identity to the religious identity.

I think it was a success story for us to obtain official approval to include the Christian education curriculum in the tawjihi. At the same time we had a serious responsibility, among other things, to train religious education teachers to work on teaching our children how to live the Christian faith and not just studying for grades and taking exams, in addition to asserting our existence and being in this country. Our religion and faith in Christ is tied to the land, the homeland, and to our Palestinian identity.

Can the term sumud be used in multi-religious education (living together classes) as sumud is a value common to the Christian and Islamic religions?

I am proud that I participate in the program "Citizenship and Diversity: Christian-Muslim Living Together" which has been led by the Arab Educational institute for years. During my work and my involvement in this program, I noticed the change among my students and their acceptance of the other. Many success stories emerged as a result of this program. For this program to continue, the concept of sumud can be added as an essential part of the program, because there can be no Christian and Muslim living together in Palestine under occupation without the presence of sumud. The concepts of living together and sumud must be studied and linked and included in the curriculum.

Sheikh 'Omar Ghnaim

“Sacrifice comes when you remain steadfast to your principles, land, and ideas.”



'Omar Ghnaim is retired inspector religious (Islamic) education in the Bethlehem district.

What does sumud mean to you?

The term sumud looks a modern word but it existed in the past in the sense of firmness, resistance, patience and perseverance. These meanings can be found in the Noble Qur'an in the following verse: "Allah keeps firm those who believe, with the firm word, in worldly life and in the Hereafter. And Allah sends astray the wrongdoers. And Allah does what He wills" (Surat Ibrahim, 14:27). It is also mentioned in the meaning of patience as in the Almighty's words: "Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account" (Sura az-Zumar, 39-10); "O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient" (Surat al-Baqara, 2: 153).

Steadfastness in the sense of perseverance is based on the following words: "O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful" (Surat al-Imran, 3:200).

In recent times sumud has been linked to the issue of the occupation of Palestine, and the word sumud has become rooted. It forms the cornerstone of steadfastness on the ground in living one's life and resisting the occupier. I consider the land as a plant that has strong roots, and needs attention and care. I belong to this land, care for it and cultivate it without being asked to; it is part of me and I am part of it. I neither destroy it nor easily surrender it to the hands of the occupation, which tries every second to usurp the land by force. Caring for the land is a patriotic and religious duty that must not be neglected.

Everything that the Palestinian lives comes with the meaning of steadfastness, whether it is sumud on the land, its preservation and cultivation, or the meaning of thought and culture that we cherish, or whether it comes from religion or traditions. And because of that, the meaning of sumud has become important in our lives, especially since the Palestinian people is subjected to injustice, abuse, torture, land theft, and more.

Have you had a special experience, whether at the level of the family or society, which told you the meaning of sumud?

Sumud came in the sense of patience. Each one of us is exposed to calamities and tribulations especially in the case of the death of a dear person. And from here the turning point in life starts. My experience of sumud was during high school when I lost my mother. My steadfastness and patience revealed themselves at this stage when I succeeded in completing high school, and this is the strongest testament to my patience and sumud in life.

In general, there is no life without hope. Despite the health issues that I have been experiencing, such as an open heart surgery, diabetes, and hoarseness, I still give and volunteer in the local community.

Does sumud depend on the concept of sacrifice, or can it express joy?

The fact is that *sumud* and sacrifice are complementary to each other, and there is a close connection between them. There is no sacrifice without steadfastness or steadfastness without sacrifice. The sacrifice appears when you remain steadfast to your principles, land, and ideas. But in exchange you sacrifice in your comfort, time, happiness, money, effort, or losing dear ones.

As for steadfastness in the sense of joy, it occurs when a person achieves all his or her goals. Despite my retirement from working in education and teaching, I still provide services to society, and this giving gives me joy. However, sometimes our steadfastness may reach a state of despair and sadness as a result of the lethargy of those around us, despite our patience and sacrifices. The greatest example of this is what happens in international forums and the reluctance of some to stand by Palestinians despite the *sumud* of the Palestinian people.

Is steadfastness a Palestinian term, or is it a humanitarian, political, or religious concept? Why?

First, *sumud* cannot be confined to Palestine only. It is practiced from ancient times. As a human concept it is present in many cases, including the resistance of the Vietnamese people during the occupation by the US and in Algeria during the French occupation, and in many other countries that were or are still occupied. So it is a universal and human concept, and it shows itself during many occasions and in many appearances. *Sumud* is a phenomenon of which the Palestinian people are proud. *Sumud* has different appearances according to the field in which it shows itself. In the political field, *sumud* is characterized by its political character. If we talk about patience and perseverance, it takes a religious character, while if we talk about civic values and ethics, it becomes more social, and so on.

What is the meaning of sumud in the Holy Qu'ran? What are the terms which come close to sumud?

First, a saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "And indeed, you are of a great moral Character" [Qur'an; 68:4]. He also shed light on values and morals, and this is what distinguished the prophets and messengers from others. If we look at Surat Al Hojorat, we see that many of the verses ask to avoid the many bad habits that undermine society, as the Almighty says: "Oh you who believe! Avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin, and do not spy nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? But you abhor it; and be careful of (your duty to) Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful" (Sura Al-Hujurat, 49: 12).

Positive habits were mentioned: "O mankind, indeed we have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (Surat al-Hujurat, 49:13). And the Almighty said: "And we have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what we have created, with [definite] preference" (Surat al-Isra, 17:70).

And His Almighty focused on the morals and sublime values in all the divine books, as he called people to obey them and call to them, and he came with the words of God Almighty on the authority of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "And we have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Surat al-Anbiyaa, 21:107).

Therefore God called for values and morals, including steadfastness and others. And in the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, when a group of companions came to him, and among them was Sahib's companions saying that you should not pray for us. He said: "Among the nations before you a (believing) man would be put in a ditch that was dug for him, and a saw would be put over his head and he would be cut into two pieces; yet that (torture) would not make him give up his religion. His body would be combed with iron combs that would remove his flesh from the bones and nerves, yet that would not make him abandon his religion" (Book 61, Hadith 119). Based on this hadith, the Sunnah of Allah in all peoples is steadfast in the truth. Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said: "I have only been sent to perfect good moral character" (Musnad Ahmad).

He ordered to be honest and forbade what is wrong, to be virtuous and adhere to morals, as human values do not belong to any nation, sect or religion.

There are many stories that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, including in Surat Al-Buruj, which speaks of an unjust king who wanted to get people not to worship God, so he ordered a large ditch to be dug for those who worshipped and set fire to it (85: 4-7). And that is what Almighty God said: "By the sky containing great stars and [by] the promised Day and [by] the witness and what is witnessed, cursed were the companions of the trench [containing] the fire full of fuel, when they were sitting near it and they, to what they were doing against the believers, were witnesses and they resented them not except because they believed in Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy" (Surat al Buruj 85:22).

And there was a woman with a small child in a cradle and she was hesitant to utter the words of Jesus, peace be upon him. Jesus said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet (Surat Maryam, 19:30).

There is the story of Abraham, peace be upon him, when he destroyed the idols and his people gathered to throw him into the fire, then God Almighty commanded the fire to cool down by saying, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham" (Surat al-Anbiyaa, 21:69). So there was nothing but patience and steadfastness in God responding to Abraham.

In the Prophetic Biography it is said that when Muslims converted to Islam, they were subjected to torture, including the family of Yasser. Sumaya, Yasser's wife, was the first female martyr in Islam. The Prophet used to pass by them saying: "Patience, O family of Yasir! Your meeting-place will be Paradise." We note the persistence and patience in these stories, and other stories about the life of the Prophet, including the torture and the putting of filth on his head during his prayer at the Kaaba. Among them is also the story that his uncle Abu Lahab and his wife used to put thorns on his way. In the Surat Al-Masad the Almighty said: "May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will burn in a fire of flame, and his wife also, bearing wood, having on her neck a rope of twisted strands" (Surat al-Masad 111: 1-5).

And this also applied when the Muslims were boycotted for three years and besieged by the people of Abu Talib. Despite being the prophets' uncle, Abu Talib did not believe, and he was with the infidels. This boycott was the cause that the people of Mecca did not buy, sell, or marry Muslims. Muslims began to eat tree leaves, but they were patient and persevered in front of this boycott, following the example of the messengers and prophets in their patience and steadfastness.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in Palestinian education? Why?

Without any doubt, this concept should be included in the curriculum. The greatest example of this is in Surat Al-Kahf, which mentions many stories of the prophets, including the story of Moses when he said that he was the most knowledgeable man on earth. God sent him to Al-Khader and Joshua bin Noah was with him. Moses asked him to learn. Al-Khader required him to be patient and not to wonder what was happening. He told him, "Did I not say that you will not be able to have patience with me?" (Surat al Aāyat 18: 65–82). One of the requirements of knowledge is that you should be patient and steadfast in receiving information.

As for the issue of integrating the term sumud into the educational curriculum, the Islamic education curriculum from the fifth to twelve grades has a unit about morals, discipline and values that recalls and teaches many moral values through stories from the prophets and messengers, such as honesty, trustworthiness, courage, patience, fortitude, commitment and others.

The idea of dividing and politicizing the term sumud is wrong, since sumud includes many domains, meanings and images. It is not permissible to regard it as relevant to only one area, politics, as it then neglects the human, educational and economic meanings of the term. Steadfastness is a comprehensive word. Whoever wants to subdivide it into political, religious or other categories is ignorant about the meaning of the word. What we have to do is to educate our children and implant all its meanings in their souls and let it direct their behavior in their lives. At the same time, we need to try to prevent that it is turned into a word of extremism despite its beautiful meanings.

Can the term sumud be used in religious education or living together classes, as it is a value shared between the Christian and Islamic religions?

The incorporation of this word and its meanings into Islamic education should be on a large scale. There are many examples that indicate sumud in the Holy Qur'an, as represented by suras and verses about the prophet Mohammed, as in Surat Maryam, Surat Al-Baqarah, Surat Yusuf and others. Also the Prophet's life includes many applicable examples to be taught, as well as the stories of the noble companions that indicate values, morals and politeness. On the social level we can talk about the stages many countries went through, especially in their steadfastness in the face of occupation and other challenges.

The Arab Educational Institute works since years on the program "Citizenship and Diversity: Christian-Muslim Living Together." This program tells about stories of sumud during the stages of Palestinian life all the way since the First World War, the Nakba (1948), the Naksa (1967), and the uprisings that we still live today. AEI also published many stories about history and interfaith cooperation during the many events that happened in Palestine, whether good or bad. In this year, known as the year of the coronavirus, citizens have shown many examples of cooperation and living together between different religions and classes in society.

Ferial Kassis:

“I will never feel joy and comfort away from my family and homeland.”



Ferial Kassis is teacher of Religious Education at the German Evangelical Lutheran School - Talitha Kumi in Beit Jala.

What does sumud mean to you?

Sumud is the authentic belonging to my religious, national, political, social and family identity in all areas of life.

It is also about sticking to my home and family rather than emigrating to find work and establish a living abroad. Sumud expresses loyalty to my land. For no matter what financial hardships I will go through or for whatever other reason, I will not sell my family land, even not to my countrymen, whom I fear might betray me and sell the land to the occupier. The land is a legacy for my children and grandchildren coming after me.

Have you gone through a special experience, whether at the level of the family or society, which revealed you the meaning of sumud?

I was born into a family where paternal and maternal uncles migrated because of the Nakba. My family did not flee from our town of Beit Jala. My father was alone as his brother was in exile. My father took care of his sister who was displaced from Lydda. Both shared the inheritance and remained steadfast. The other sisters emigrated and became alienated from their country. My grandfather died and no one from the emigrants said him farewell, even though they had at the time the financial means to come. I felt the sadness of my grandfather and father, and decided to keep my future family together.

Afterwards history repeated itself. My brother and cousin, his mother's only, emigrated together to Germany due to the first intifada and the closure of universities, in order to study and find work. They married foreign women and settled there. Events once again repeated themselves when my older brother came to live alone abroad while his brother was already living in exile. When our parents were buried, my brothers could not say goodbye to them.

So my steadfastness increased. I prevented my children from emigrating so that I would not be deprived of their farewell before my and their father's departure after hopefully a long life.

At the beginning of my married life, my husband insisted for years to emigrate in order to find work abroad and provide us with a decent life and to take care of the future of our children. I strongly refused despite the fact that the political situation, as usual, was unstable. His work was also unstable and not guaranteed. And again his request repeated itself after years when my children were searching for job opportunities and a better life abroad. My husband encouraged them, and I, as usual, took a steadfast position despite my sense of injustice about their future chances. I will never feel the joy and comfort away from the homeland, the town, the extended family and the unity of my family.

Does steadfastness depend on the concept of sacrifice, or does it express joy?

There is no doubt that the two concepts are linked. While I sacrifice a decent life, luxury and freedom to feel the joy of living in my country in which I was born and in the soil of which I want to be buried, I stay in daily contact with my larger family and my loyal friends. They are more precious than money, luxury and freedom. In foreign countries I will not find anything that replaces these values in my life.

Is sumud a Palestinian term, or a humanitarian, political, or religious one? Why?

Initially I used to define sumud with respect to the religious identity first. That is not a coincidence or a figure of speech. Sumud is for me related to a purely Palestinian religious identity, as Palestine is distinguished among the countries of the world by its identity as a blessed Holy Land, as the cradle of Christ and the home of all prophets. Most of the events of the Old Testament happened in Palestine. The prophets are all Palestinian. Here lies the focus of the political issue with the occupation. If we do not stand up, the Holy Land, with its churches and mosques, will turn into a tourist museum for foreign visitors. The occupation will benefit in terms of billions of dollars of income.

However, sumud has also become a term for all the afflicted peoples in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Afghanistan and elsewhere... Sumud is also a human concept. It expresses social solidarity, aid, popular cohesion and other characteristics of a steadfast people. There is no doubt that sumud has a special political aspect for us Palestinians as a result of the occupation.

Does each of us have a certain way to demonstrate his or her sumud? How?

Let me give you a list of sumud attitudes and actions. There is no doubt that holding on to the land and not selling it to a relative, stranger, or occupier is a form of sumud. Not emigrating is sumud. Cultivating a home orchard or land and reaping its fruits is sumud. Educating my children academically, as well as in industrial and agricultural work, in all fields of education and work is sumud. Solidarity and the promotion of living together, to remain as one people against the occupier, is sumud. Love and fraternity is sumud. Peaceful legitimate resistance, dialogue, and striving to deliver the truth of the situation to the world is sumud. Setting up good projects is sumud. Supporting all Palestinian institutions and associations is sumud. National, religious and political unity is sumud.

The most important thing is the return of all emigrants, with their knowledge, experience, and money. This is sumud and liberation.

How does sumud appear in the Bible?

The Holy Family, the family of the Lord Jesus, is the basic scriptural model for defining *sumud*. Consider the displacement and flight of the Holy Family to Egypt under the threat of Herod to kill the child Jesus and the massacre of the innocent children in the Bethlehem district. The Holy Family has been the first deported Palestinian family under the threat of Roman occupation. The family stayed in Egypt for an unknown number of years. But after the death of Herod the will of God allowed them to return to the homeland, and the family did not hesitate to return.

After the thirty-three years that Jesus reached, he was confronted by false accusations and false witnesses. He accepted death voluntarily and without hesitation to implement the command of God. Led by this courage the disciples, apostles, and the early church stood in the face of persecution, killing and torture. The harvest was a strong church steadfast as a rock in front of the gates of hell. It would not have been so strong except for the promise of the Lord Jesus.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in Palestinian education? Why?

Yes, sure, it should be compulsory because it relates to our past, our present, and the future of our children.

Is there a risk to understand sumud as the politicization of education? Some parents and teachers have a hard time understanding sumud because it is a term associated with politics. What is your view on the subject?

We are a living example of our sumud for future generations. Sumud is not a political term only. It has many meanings, including justice and equality. Sumud is a legacy related to a national identity, a concern for the environment, a religious identity and a culture of justice confronting those who neglect their people and sell their property, culture and principles to obtain material wealth.

Can sumud be a useful guiding term in religious and citizenship education?

I previously mentioned that we must cultivate sumud and citizenship and strengthen it among our children and students. They are the builders of the future, and it is their duty to liberate and advance the country and preserve sumud's legacy in all its forms.

Can it be used as a common value between Christian and Islamic religions?

All religions talk about the concepts of sumud, citizenship, diversity, living together, love of the neighbor, and of development, preservation of personal and public property, strengthening cultures, and the advancement of mankind and humanity as a whole. We cannot achieve these demands and concepts except by staying steadfast in our beloved and dear homeland in the various ways that I mentioned earlier, and by following the teachings of the prophets, messengers and clerics that always invite us to stay steadfast and defend this Holy Land, which is a source of pride for us and for future generations after us. This will not be achieved without planting these values through education, training and practice.

Other references mentioned by Ferial as important to understanding the depth of the sumud concept as present in the Bible:

- Standing in front of the enemy in the name of the Lord, such as David in front of Goliath the mighty - belief in God.
- Steadfast in the face of pagan cults.
- Prayer: People prayed in Babylon for seventy years to return to Jerusalem.
- Facing difficulties such as Moses and the challenges he faced, or the Prophet Elijah pursued by queen Jezebel between Palestine and Jordan for killing the 400 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel.
- “Lift up *your* tired hands, then, and strengthen *your trembling* knees!” (Hebrews 12:12)
- “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.” (Matthew 5:42)
- “Ask and it *will* be given to *you*; seek and *you will find*; knock and the door *will* be opened to *you*.” (Matthew 7:7)
- “Whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” (Matthew 5:39)
- Removing social classes: “He who has two garments should share the other one.” (Luke 3:11)
- Justice: the parable of the unjust judge.
- Communion in sharing money and food in the early church.
- Resisting material greed and selfishness: the parable of the rich fool.
- Bearing good fruits: the parable of the sower.
- Supporting the poor, widows, orphans, and aliens by apostles from all over the world.
- Returning home after missionary journeys.
- Torture and persecution of Christians in Jerusalem and the world, and the continued evangelization and spread of Christianity.
- Christian movements supported the emancipation of slaves: the abolition of slavery.
- They also supported women having equal and full rights like men.

Sheikh Maher Assaf

“Sumud is a method and practice of life in all its forms.”



Sheikh Maher Assaf is teacher Islamic religious education at TSG St Joseph School in Bethlehem.

What does sumud mean to you?

Sumud is not just a concept but rather a comprehensive approach that includes all aspects of a person’s life, whether inside the home, in human relations in society, or when facing internal and external pressures, especially the occupation.

Sumud can be seen as a tree that branches out to all its meanings, such as joy, generosity, commitment, a sense of continuity, patriotism, belief in a steadfast God, respect for pluralism I want to liken sumud to the steadfast tree rooted in the earth with its strong roots. The steadfast person seeks to preserve his or her existence and values. We as Palestinians have ancient roots in Palestine, the land of Canaan.

I personally prefer to die in this land, Palestine, among my people, as I love to keep seeing the people, greet them, speak with them on a daily basis. Here I feel my value as a Palestinian person. I may not find this feeling in any other country in the world.

Sumud should be also defined as the ability to cope with physical or psychological pain in the face of adversity, psychological trauma, crises, or exposure to threats and pressures.

What were your special experiences in which your sumud was tested?

I was more than five times arrested and imprisoned: Although it was a bad experience, I much benefitted from it, especially by learning the meaning of steadfastness, patience and endurance. As a result of my belonging to a certain political party, I had to face the threat of political exclusion and job loss. The society abandoned me and people told me that I deserved what I went through. This required much endurance from me. During the First Intifada, I used to assist people in the logistics of distributing food and clothes, and supporting the cultivation of the land. I was involved in confrontations with the occupation, and felt a strong sense of patriotism. We were at the time like one Palestinian family. We were resilient despite the suffering, fear and pain that we went through. We were all together, Muslims and Christians. I participated in many women’s rights and human rights organizations and others, as I

participated in advocacy work based on justice, building the rule of law and equality between people.

I felt also tested when my uncle was murdered by a co-worker. He was very close to me, like my best friend. The experience of loss I went through was humanly painful. It made me feel how difficult life is; how much it requires patience. Finally, I lost my mother, my sister and my friend as a result of cancer. The experience of losing such closely related loved ones was very difficult indeed. My psyche was affected greatly, I needed faith and stamina to overcome these losses.

Does steadfastness depend on the concept of sacrifice or can it express joy?

Sumud is a method and practice of life in all its forms. Think for instance of weddings, loving relationships, marriage, education, being productive, cultivating the land. These meanings are on top of the meanings of sacrifice, giving, patience and endurance. Actually, when we go through the experiences of sacrifice and giving, there is bound to be joy, happiness and hope. Among the most important factors of sumud is a sense of belonging, unity, cooperation, knowledge and economic productivity.

Each time I see Palestinian celebrations and popular or heritage events, especially in which children participate and dance to the tunes of the Palestinian dabkeh, I see through them the roots of the land growing and nurturing our joint tree which gives shade to freedom, dignity, hope and dreams.

Is steadfastness a Palestinian term, or a humanitarian, political, or religious one? Why?

As I said earlier, steadfastness is a method of life. It is a comprehensive human concept. It is therefore not limited to politics or religion. Throughout history the peoples of the earth persevered. They persevered until they reached where we are today in terms of development and civilization, notwithstanding all the difficult circumstances that humanity has faced throughout history.

But we as Palestinians have always been subject to wars, invasions and occupation, up to this day. Therefore, we need sumud more than any other people. It thus appears to some that steadfastness is a Palestinian concept.

Does each of us have a certain way to demonstrate his or her resilience? How?

God provided man with the ability to endure and withstand the most severe difficulties and pains. At the same time, steadfastness can be shown by spreading love, hope, trust, cooperation, unity, acceptance of the other, and the practice of living together.

The Arab Educational institute has had and still has a great role in activating the concepts of sumud and living together. I believe that state institutions, including churches and mosques,

must always strive to strengthen sumud so that we remain strong and able to withstand the pressures.

What is the meaning of sumud in the Holy Quran? What are the terms in the Holy Quran close to the term steadfastness? Could you give some religious examples of steadfastness?

The word sumud itself does not appear in the Holy Qur'an except as one of the good names of God: God is steadfast - that is, steadfast as opposed to instable. But the Qur'an speaks about steadfastness in other related word meanings and expressions, including honesty, tolerance, commitment, acceptance of others, and respect for difference, pluralism and diversity.

Examples of steadfastness as patience include: patience in acts of worship such as fasting, patience with regard to not harming others, patience with regard to the Hajj, and patience with people who have to pay back money [debtors]. There are also stories in the Holy Qur'an that talk about the patience of some prophets, such as the patience of the Prophet Job, and the patience of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the story of the birth of Jesus.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in Palestinian education? Why?

As sumud is a human need in the face of life's difficulties, it must be taught in the curriculum in school at all levels and in the university as well. It is educationally important that it is taught as a way of thinking, a method of life, and a method of confrontation, resistance and challenge. Doing so helps to create a society with strong personalities and a strong joint identity in which values of cooperation and living together come forward.

Is there a risk that steadfastness will be understood as politicization of education? There are some parents and teachers who have difficulty to deal with sumud because it is a term associated with politics. What is your view on the subject?

The Arab mentality sometimes suffers from a crisis in concepts and terminology. It is a mentality dominated by rigid diagnostic thinking. Some may refrain from talking about steadfastness for fear that it will be counted as a political action that might be punished, or that the concept of steadfastness is a political concept based on the politicization of religion. This fear is due to the religious extremism that has arisen in an Arab society isolated from democracy, pluralism and diversity for centuries. It is clear that sumud is a human and religious concept linked to human values and the dialectic of life and death. In the end, steadfastness is a comprehensive human concept. God asks us to persevere and be patient. Without steadfastness we die, or we die while being physically alive.

The teacher is a role model, just as Jesus Christ was when he shed his blood and felt the pain in the face of injustice. This is a lesson from history and religion which makes it imperative for the teacher to be a teacher who is steadfast in all aspects of life, whether it is our religion, history, thought, or economy.

Would sumud be useful or effective as a guiding term in inter-religious (Islamic-Christian) and citizenship education? And if so, can you give us examples?

Sumud is a common term in the Noble Qur'an as it comes forward in other words such as patience, perseverance, commitment and testing:

Surat Al Imran: "O you who believe[d]! Be steadfast and [be] patient and [be] constant and fear Allah so that you ... outdo others in endurance, and remain united strengthening the bond of mutual brotherhood."

Surat Al-Baqarah: "And we will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient..."

Surat Al-Baqarah: "But those 'believers' who were certain they would meet Allah reasoned, 'How many times has a small force vanquished a mighty army by the Will of Allah! And Allah is 'always' with the steadfast.'"

Surat Al-Zumar: "Only those who endure patiently will be given their reward without limit."

These verses must be included in the curriculum to express sumud, because steadfastness will help the student to solve life's problems. The curriculum can enrich the meanings of steadfastness by assigning tasks to students and encouraging extracurricular activities.

Can the term sumud be used in inter-religious education (living together classes), as it is a value common to the Christian and Islamic religion? And if so, can you give us examples?

There must be various subjects for the joint inter-religious lesson under the title of "sumud, religion and the world." They should include basic terms, objectives and options for discussion. This approach will benefit from the students' experiences and push them to talk and brainstorm about the value of steadfastness. The surahs of the Qur'an include real-life examples of steadfastness, including that of the Christian king of Negus [Abyssinia]. Relationships should be built on respect for religious difference and pluralism. The Qur'an mentions Jesus Christ and Mary, the mother of Jesus. It talks about Christianity in the Surat al-Umran, Surat al-Ma'idah, Surat al-Rum and Surat Maryam. I see diversity as part of the Christian and Islamic faith. We believe in one God, and God wanted this diversity and richness. He is humanity par excellence, and part of our belief that diversity is a divine will.

The first intifada was the best witness to the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. Think of the day that Christians opened their homes for the Muslims to sleep in and take shelter from the occupation forces. The same applies vice versa to the Muslims. Palestinian Muslim and Christian blood mixed in the land of Christ and the land of Isra and Mi'raj [the Prophet Muhammad's journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent into heaven]. On the day of protest against the new surveillance cameras installed at the gates of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem in 2017, we saw joint prayers challenging the threats of occupation. Muslims and Christians were praying together with the Qur'an and the Bible in hand. We saw the sheikh and the priest together. This is a great lesson for humanity in appreciation of the meaning of sumud. This is in addition to sumud as the reality of living together, sharing a livelihood.

Where is our role as teachers in enriching the curriculum?

A leadership role is played by the Arab Educational Institute in raising the awareness of the Palestinian community through the concepts of living together, citizenship, pluralism, sumud and leadership. AEI plays a pioneering role in the cooperation with the Ministry of Education for developing programs and mechanisms promoting an educational curriculum guided by these concepts. Taking teachers' opinions into account and involving them in this process is a valuable effort. We must work on developing new, continuous programs and new ideas based on what has been done in order to move to another new, more fruitful and visible stage.

How can we revive the spirit of the Prophet Muhammad's covenant in our time?

The Arab mood is sometimes volatile and can be built not on foundations of sound knowledge but rather on illusions. The economic pressures made many of us associate with external leaders and organizations. These organizations bring discord in the society at the inside. The whole world interferes in Palestinian decision-making, making it presently incapable of independent thinking.

We need to reinforce the unity of sumud within Palestinian society, along with the unity of discourse and decision. In light of the present corona crisis and the economic crisis, it happens that now even more than before extremism and the lack of acceptance of the other is on the rise. I believe that without hope a person cannot continue in his or her life. The collision between different mentalities in one's society makes you lose hope at certain moments. However, we must remain strong and steadfast as much as possible. We should not step back, we should always find incentives and commitment to continue.

Sheikha Munira Hamid

“Sumud is a human, political, religious and Palestinian concept.”



Sheikha Munira Hamid is responsible for the Women's Action Department of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in the Bethlehem district.

What does sumud mean to you?

Sumud is commitment and giving the public good priority over private interests.

Have you gone through a special event, whether at the level of the family or society, in which you experienced the meaning of sumud?

During the crisis that we and the whole world are going through as a result of the spread of the coronavirus, the Palestinian National Authority suffers from a financial crisis, which brings them to pay us half of our salaries or delay the payment. At the same time I had the chance to accept attractive and fully paid job opportunities. However, I refuse to give up my job because I own a message. I try to persist in and stick to my workplace in order to help people and spread our religious message. This call is more important than any private interest.

Does sumud depend on the concept of sacrifice, or can it express joy?

Sumud depends on sacrifice. A person sacrifices his time, money, effort, and health for the sake of sumud and out of a sense of responsibility. All this stems from personal convictions. The person sacrifices for the sake of sumud and hope in order to reach joy.

Is sumud a Palestinian term, or humanitarian, political, or religious? Why?

Sumud is a human term linked to human beings. People try to stand firm in their homeland and on their land in all ways, and resist the enemies of their land through their presence and the sumud in their homeland. As a political concept sumud is related to steadfastness, especially in the lives of Palestinians under occupation. Political steadfastness is shown by politicians who do not give up and do not make concessions. Likewise, sumud is a religious concept, as the Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) said: "Had it not been for you that they established you, I would have almost left a little thing to them." He has rooted us in this religion and granted us patience and steadfastness to spread it. And when Abu Talib - the uncle of the Messenger of God (may God bless him and grant him peace) - came to the

Messenger and asked him to leave this religion, the Messenger of God said to him: "O my uncle! By God, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left on condition that I abandon this course, until God has made me victorious, or I perish therein, I would not abandon it."

Therefore, steadfastness is linked to religion as well. From what I mentioned earlier, it can be concluded that sumud is a human, political, religious and Palestinian concept.

What is the meaning of sumud in the Holy Quran? What are the terms in the Holy Quran close to the term sumud?

Sumud is not mentioned directly in the Holy Qur'an but it comes through many terms, including patience, steadfastness, loyalty and strengthening. And prayer, for God is with the patient. In one verse it says: "O you who have believed, when you encounter a company [from the enemy forces], stand firm and remember Allah much that you may be successful" (Surat al-Anfal, 8:45). The Holy Qur'an also mentions: "We prove your heart with it."

What are the religious values that represent sumud?

One of the most important religious values that represent sumud is justice, for it is the reason for the ummah's survival, as God commands justice and charity. Justice is an important condition for the establishment and stability of any state. Another important value is human dignity, as God Almighty says: "We have honored the sons of Adam" (Surat al-Isra, 17:70).

Therefore, man is honored by God, the Glorified and Exalted, regardless of the differences between human beings. He did not specify that only Muslim persons are honored by God. Likewise, the two values of the common good and acceptance of others are among the values found in the Noble Qur'an. They contribute to strengthening citizenship and achieving the public interest.

Give us some religious examples of sumud.

The Messenger of God (may God's prayers and peace be upon him) said: "Whatever affliction a Muslim befalls in terms of blame, affliction, worry, sorrow, harm, or grief, he considers his stigma." He provides him with refuge, and this is what drives people with affliction and disease to patience. The messengers and prophets have experienced many calamities during their journeys, such as our master Joseph when he was tortured and imprisoned. But God empowered the earth and made him a minister. Another example is the Prophet Abraham when God took him away from the fire.

One of the greatest examples of sumud is the steadfastness of the Messenger (may God bless him and grant him peace) and his compassion for people of all religions. An example of this is when the people of Taif ordered their children to hit the Messenger with stones. When they did so, blood flowed from his two honorable feet. The Messenger (may God bless him) was sad for

that, and he said: "O Allah, I appeal to You for the weakness in my strength and my limited power and the treatment of contempt and humiliation from people." Then Gabriel came to him and said to him: "O Muhammad: God Almighty has heard what your people said to you. I am the king of the mountains, and it is Your Lord who has sent me to you to order me from your command. Whatever you wish, if you wish to beat them with a stick, I will do." Consequently the Messenger did not take revenge on them, but was patient and forgave them. He is an example of patience and forgiveness to be followed in the case of pain and affliction. This is what our Islamic religion teaches us.

Do you think it is important to include sumud in Palestinian education?

Certainly, sumud must be included in the curriculum units, especially as we live under occupation and as we have sacred issues that require us to withstand, such as the causes of prisoners and other persons of all kinds. Sumud must be included in the curricula to create a generation that belongs to a pro-active country. The term can be covered by presenting some vivid examples of historical and religious personalities and Palestinian leaders who have lived steadfast during their careers.

Through sumud, we should seek to cultivate positive interaction and positive, social values among our children. They should become effective participants, bear social responsibility, and contribute to spreading the authentic Palestinian heritage and history as well as work to strengthen the spirit of attachment to their land. This requires the presence of social cohesion and a common social system. They contribute to strengthening a sense of belonging to this country, providing students with religious roots and the presence of a spiritual dimension through the connection between faith and responsibility.

Is there a risk that sumud will be understood as the politicization of education? There are some parents and teachers who have difficulty understanding sumud because it is a term associated with politics. What is your view on the subject?

I would like to send a message to the people who fear the inclusion of sumud in education considering it a form of politicizing education. As a Palestinian people, we cannot isolate ourselves from politics, neither in our lives, our business, nor even in our homes, as we live in a political reality imposed on us. But I stress the importance of a common general policy. Our state is Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital. We should not adopt the policy of a specific party, leader, or approach in order to establish a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. If our children do not have full awareness of Palestinian history and the basic facts on the ground, how can they learn to defend and claim their rights in this land?

Will sumud be useful or effective as a guiding term in religious (Islamic or Christian) or citizenship education?

Common human values are what helps us build the homeland, and root us and hold on to the land, in addition to the value of social harmony and the need to deal with humanitarian issues. I

would like to focus on the value of accepting others, because God did not want all human beings to be Muslims but rather wanted this diversity in humanity so that all people would work in complementarity with each other. Likewise, we must focus on shared values such as citizenship so that our students apply them and live them in their lives. If religion is taught in the right way, we will properly promote human, religious and spiritual values. I can summarize my words saying that we need to teach students effective, active and practical sumud.

Can the term sumud be used in inter-religious education (living together classes), as it is a value common to the Christian and Islamic religions?

Contributing to a shared life requires to pay attention to common issues and values, cooperation and the importance of citizenship and the homeland. I notice that in cities there is more awareness and knowledge of others who are different in comparison to the villages that need more awareness and knowledge in matters of living together and acceptance of the other. Developed peoples are those who work to enhance the values and commonalities among its members, while backward countries focus on different issues among their people. We find that the percentage of conflicts in developed countries is much less than in Arab countries, as these countries believe and work to promote pluralism and diversity. Accordingly we must be strong in our common identity, which is one nation that unites us, but it is at the same time imperative to us, as teachers and parents, that our children are aware of the importance of living together, diversity and difference in order to serve this country.

Rania Murra

“For us Palestinians, *sumud* represents life on earth.”

Rania Murra is Director of the Arab Educational Institute in Bethlehem



What does sumud mean to you?

The first thing that comes to my mind when hearing the word sumud: How can a person smile and have hope in the midst of darkness? Every day while driving to my work at the Sumud Story House, I pass the separation wall. The center where I work is located in the area of Rachel's Tomb, in area C. I see the checkpoint 300 in this area now closed by the occupational forces during this period of

corona. It's desolate. These scenes tell me that the concept of sumud is more than just a term or an ordinary word. Our steadfastness is demonstrated by continuing to go to work under the most difficult circumstances. We continue to live and smile despite the political, economic and health problems. We continue to learn, teach and train sumud at a time when we need first to live sumud ourselves.

Sumud is a path of life or a way of life. For us Palestinians, sumud represents life on earth. Each and every human being in Palestine tells a story of steadfastness.

Have you had a special experience, whether at the level of the family or society, which told you the meaning of sumud?

The most difficult thing a person can go through in his life is to experience sumud in the midst of pain. I experienced that most difficult type of sumud when I lost my husband due to a terrible accident caused by a driver who did not have a driver's license and drove in a stolen vehicle. Despite these transgressions, the driver was able to get away with it and not face the punishment he deserved. This accident of course caused much suffering in our family. Through this experience, my children and I were deeply tested in our sumud. We needed to keep our sumud despite a certain level of corruption and favoritism here in the enforcement of the law, and we did not leave the land. Maybe it is necessary for a person to to some extent pass hard times during which his roots and connections are weakened and put to the test.

Does steadfastness depend on the concept of sacrifice, or can it express joy?

For me, I do not agree that the concept of sumud depends on sacrifice. We as Christians believe that our only sacrifice was made through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Steadfastness is both giving and joy. Smiling can express sumud despite all the difficulties. Sumud is actually an unlimited gift that gives us unlimited joy.

I have my hope renewed every time I go to work in marginalized areas or carry out any nonviolent activity in front of the Sumud Story House through storytelling, singing, walking in silent marches, planting olive trees, putting stories on the wall, or praying. Here I feel that there is still hope and joy in life, we seek through these activities to live the sumud and experience the joy until the victory prevails.

Is steadfastness a Palestinian term, or is it a humanitarian, political, or religious concept? Why?

Sumud is not an abstract concept but rather a way of life. Since it is a way of life, it includes human, political, religious, educational and other aspects. It is difficult to put it under one framework. God affirms that sumud is human because we have lived sumud since creation. God has given every human being the ability to endure, and when a person has determination and perseverance, he or she can withstand all the challenges.

Politically speaking, sumud is essential for us as Palestinians because we live under occupation. This steadfastness was clearly evident during the First Intifada. The fact that we searched for a unified national project helped us to survive as one people. It is difficult for a person to stand up alone. With unity and cooperation, we can survive.

Does each of us have a certain way to demonstrate sumud? How?

I believe that everyone can live his or her sumud in the first place through the family. I can see sumud in my children, especially since we went through many experiences that required a lot of sumud. Therefore, each of us must begin in his inner circle at home before preaching and teaching people the meaning of sumud in life. If I do not live sumud myself, my words do not make sense to the people to whom I try to communicate the meanings of sumud.

I also live and test my sumud in my work with women in the areas of Bethlehem, Hebron and Ramallah. I give them the space to express their needs, problems and suffering, even though I experience the same suffering. This also requires sumud. It is not easy for a Palestinian to hear about the suffering of other Palestinians, especially when women talk about their daily suffering as a result of their direct contact with the occupational forces such as in the H2 area in Hebron city. Here, sumud comes up in learning from the difficult experiences of women and their human ability to endure. While hearing their suffering I try to provide them with support as much as possible. I work with many Palestinian women and youth in the field of advocacy, lobbying and in their peaceful struggle for rights. However, our basic dilemma is that we are under occupation and under a patriarchal society both of which are incapable of granting our rights, security and safety. We often demand things that are difficult to change in this country.

What is the meaning of sumud in the Bible? What are the terms in the Bible which come close to sumud?

There are many stories in the Bible that express sumud, such as patience, fortitude, will and perseverance, mercy, and others. An example is the story of David. We see that King David is an example of sumud, as he lived through difficulties and challenges which required all his patience. His is an example of patience and steadfastness while suffering from problems within his family, from those closest to him. When we talk about the suffering as a result of living under occupation, it is true that it is difficult but in the end it is caused by an external circumstance. When suffering comes through people who are close or because of corruption, inequality and other shortcomings around us or even inside our own churches and institutions keeping the sumud becomes more difficult. But what consoles or comforts us is listening to the words of God who says: "The Lord does not waste the patience of the pious."

For us as Palestinian Christians, our Holy Bible mentions many stories and verses that talk about suffering and the patience of people. We read about the Lord's promises to the mourners, the oppressed and the widows. Each of these promises shows us a different aspect of how to be steadfast. There is no reward for a person who does not stand up. There is only reward to those who are patient and see the light of God in the midst of all the challenges. God allows these in order to test our perseverance through the circumstances under which we live.

One of the stories that touched me and which I very much appreciate in the Bible is when one of Jesus' disciples - Judas - betrayed and delivered Him to the Roman army for His crucifixion. This experience can be similar to our suffering in the occupied homeland when people lack the values that they advocate and do not live by them, and when we call for the application of the law but we do not apply it, or when we call for equality between men and women but also do not apply that.

The story of the prodigal son is one of the family stories that carry many meanings and values, including the values of sumud, endurance and fortitude as evident in the father who endured the leaving of his son after he took his share of the inheritance. However, he returned to his father after losing everything he owned. The father received him with hugs. Here, the father's sumud appears in forgiving his son. We see at the same time the other son, who was loyal to his father and respected him. He stood in wonder at his father's attitude and felt angry that his father did not ask about him but on the contrary received his brother with warmth in spite of his departure from home. This story represents sumud by the act of giving. The father gave everything to his children with love and joy and he forgave them.

There is also a beautiful biblical verse in the Epistle of James 1: 3-4 that expresses sumud: "... because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." And also James 5:11: "As you know, we count as blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy."

Through these stories, examples and verses, God wanted to convey to us a way to live our life on earth.

Do you think it is important to include the term sumud in Palestinian education? Why?

I believe that sumud should be included in all curriculum materials but no single unit should be devoted to it. This is because sumud is a way of life. It must therefore be applied to each and every situation in a specific way. Sumud must be taught in Christian and Islamic religious education, where Christians and Muslims can learn about this concept or values as it is found in their holy books. Also, it is very important to include sumud in the civic education curriculum, by highlighting sumud within the unique Palestinian experience, and showing Christian-Muslim steadfast living together on the ground. Most importantly, we live sumud in our daily life, and we reflect upon it as we go to work and study despite the presence of obstacles such as the wall and checkpoints.

It is also good to highlight in the curricula of civic and religious education how sumud started within our lives as Palestinians. The first Intifada was very important. Has it come from the outside, as a teaching, or does it come from the inside, from our suffering as Palestinians? I believe that more research must be done on the concept of sumud, its meanings and way of life, as it is an essential part of our life. Accepting and loving the other despite the differences represents sumud. I work with people from different, Christians, Muslims, city, village, camp, Bedouins backgrounds. And I think that sumud in terms of respecting diversity in unity is important and essential.

We find it difficult to cope with the difficult circumstances that we live during the coronavirus crisis and the health and safety requirements of social distancing. However, the Palestinian people always stand by each other in crisis, joy and sorrow. When showing steadfastness, solidarity, mercy and love we act for one another. We are accustomed to embrace, kiss, and dance together. Now In the time of corona we refrain from doing such things out of fear for our souls and the souls of others, all God's valuable creation. We as Palestinians have an experience that differs from the rest of the world going through the same crisis. We currently live under the restrictions of both the corona crisis and the occupation. Basically we live in a big prison all the time. Large countries have now experienced what it means to be chained and imprisoned due to the spread of COVID-19. The West may learn about sumud from us as a people under occupation.

Can the term sumud be used in multi-religious education (living together classes), as it is a value shared between the Christian and Islamic religions? If so, can you give examples.

If people do not believe in the things they do, it is difficult to make a change. For example, if I do not believe in living together and sumud and do not live it, it is difficult to make any change in the other. The change begins first with the self. Afterwards influencing the other becomes easier. The person who lives sumud can teach sumud. He or she sets an example of sumud to follow in the face of challenges.

As a Christian, I try to follow the word of Christ in one of his important verses: "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is a clear message on the importance of our love for the neighbor who may be any person on this earth. Every person I meet must feel that he is my neighbor by accepting and understanding him and working together in promoting moral values and sumud. I do call on the Ministry of Education and the Palestinian Curriculum Center to integrate interreligious education into the Christian and Islamic religious education textbooks. I do also recommend the integration of Christian and Islamic lessons into co-curricular classes and activities in order to live the values of tolerance, respect of differences, recognizing similarities and knowing the other religion.

Is there a risk that sumud will be understood as a politicization of education? There are some parents and teachers who have difficulty understanding sumud because it is a term associated with politics. What is your view on the subject?

Sumud is a patriotic concept and raises a patriotic feeling. A free nationalist person is a person who understands the meaning of steadfastness while a person who carries the ideas of separating and dividing the Palestinian people on the basis of political affiliation does not know the true meaning of sumud. A person who does not believe in God can show sumud, and therefore sumud is a concept related to human life. Steadfastness is a human concept first, then it is a religious concept, an educational value, and it can also mean loyalty to a free country not under occupation.

Concluding notes and recommendations

Without infringing upon the uniqueness of the interviewees' different approaches and backgrounds, we can say that all express important commonalities in their understandings of sumud.

Sumud is associated with a broad range of values including perseverance, patience, commitment, fortitude, justice, giving, belonging, and living together. As such, sumud is not a concept relevant to Palestine only but rather a broad human concept which is applicable to past, present and future struggles of individuals and communities. It is a comprehensive concept with human, religious, ethical, political, national, economic, social and educational dimensions, and it should not be considered as only a political concept. As a 'method' or a 'path' of life, sumud can be realized in innumerable manners.

With respect to Palestine, everything in Palestine comes with sumud. All Palestinians have to deal with the demands of sumud given the testing situations as a result of especially the occupation which all Palestinians confront. Essential to sumud is keeping the society functioning which means: taking care of the public good, contributing economically and socially, and preserving the cohesion of the community and family.

In particular important for sumud in Palestine is keeping the connection to the land. There is a need to live on it, cultivate it, take care of it, discover it. Given the multiple identities citizens have, a respect for an inclusive diversity-within-unity should guide a lively interaction between the different groups in society.

The interviews to a large extent focused on religion. Sumud is present in the Holy Qu'ran and the Holy Bible in a range of meanings including the values of patience, perseverance, firmness and commitment. Sumud is also present in the many narratives of both holy books, inspiring the believers in both religions.

Recommendations for education:

AEI is in favor of further discussing the interviews and conducting more research on the sumud concept, especially how it can be fruitfully integrated into Palestinian education.

For AEI, the general agreement between the interviewees about the need to integrate the sumud concept into the curriculum is an important finding. All agree that sumud as a human, religious, national and educational concept should come back in different educational subject fields and at different grade levels. In the field of religious education sumud education means learning to apply one's faith within an authentic context of life; that is, the methodology should involve practical and active ways of learning about values.

Critically, in order to be an effective educational concept, teachers should communicate sumud and the values of faith by their own living example. Sumud should not be taught as a rhetorical concept, as a slogan, or as a set of prescribed behaviors. As a value-related and practical concept related to testing circumstances the sumud of those who are educated as well as who educate has to come from the inside, from an inner conviction.

Such a teaching approach is presently not often applied in religious education, and therefore such approach may require reform, modernization and a change in educational methods and approaches, also in teacher training.

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