

Dear friends and supporters,

First of all, I want to express my deep gratitude to you for reacting to my appeal for Easter aid with so much love, social responsibility and generosity. We had set ourselves the ambitious goal of raising 75,000 EUR and we managed to collect almost 60,000 EUR. Most of the donations were not immediately available. Luckily, we were able to resort to interim financing by means of some funds in stock for projects that were not quite as urgent. We funded 3,650 portions of chicken and eggs plus other basic food items, allowing to put together 1,700 food parcels. Our local teams decided not to hand out everything at once, but to organize the distribution at a pace according to the best judgement. The project is still ongoing at the moment. Thank God, there are still donations coming in, which I regard as an immense blessing from the Lord.



It is important to me that you all are aware of how much joy this Easter aid has brought to the recipients. The gratitude was particularly noticeable because there were hardly any other aid organizations working on site. Much joy and gratitude has also been expressed by members of our local teams, owing to the fact that they received the means to help others. A line that has often been repeated by the helpers to the recipients is “You should above all thank God and

the charitable donors for these gifts”.

In my perception, this project has a close connection to the mystery of Christ's resurrection. During the distribution of aid parcels, the young volunteers felt the power of Christ in their hearts and the recipients experienced that Jesus is living right among them, that he comes to help those in need and provides for their lives. This is precisely the aim of the Foundation *Korbgemeinschaft*, – to show that “God is at work” and that his works are accomplished through the hands of believers. Unfortunately, the situation in Syria is still not getting better. Often, when a ray of hope appears on the horizon, it soon vanishes again. Politics is unstable, the security situation is precarious and the economy is still in the doldrums. The current government is cautiously accepted by some parts of society, but not by all.

The jihadists who helped overthrow the government on December 8, 2024, intend to apply Sharia law to all citizens. However, the economic sanctions will not be lifted by the USA until certain conditions are met. The exclusion of extremists (jihadists) from all government offices is one of the conditions. I personally think that this is difficult to achieve at the

moment. It remains to be seen how and whether the new Syrian leader will manage to implement this request. We are now hearing about a lot of tensions on the outskirts of Damascus, in the south and on the coast. It is difficult to explain and understand who is opposed against whom.



On May 13, 2025, during a visit of US President Donald Trump to Saudi Arabia, the termination of economic sanctions was one of the themes discussed. This message was cheered by many citizens in Syria. On the following day, the US President met with the Syrian President Ahmad Al-Sharaa in the presence of the Saudi Arabian Prince and heir to the throne Mohammed Bin-Salman. Many now expect a better future. It remains to be hoped that the EU, for its part, will fulfill its intention recently announced in the media to let the sanctions expire in June, i.e. to refrain from extending them any further.

Many Christians currently find themselves at a loss in the midst of all these tensions and upheavals. As was the case during the Assad regime, they do not oppose the government, but continue to campaign for peace. However, they feel insecure and they are deeply worried about what might happen next. In contact with ordinary people, you hear statements like these: “We need miracles to be saved”, “Only the mercy of God can help us”, “It won't stay like this forever, we believe it will get better”; “God save us!”. The majority judge the situation as bleak and uncertain, and many would prefer to leave the country.



Regardless of what people think, I personally see a great opportunity for Christians to demonstrate the importance of Christianity, to bear witness by means of good deeds. There is a lot of work to be done, but there are only few workers. We should pray for them. Thank God they exist, albeit in small numbers. This is why we must not abandon them. We must place our trust in them.



It is all about finding ways of salvation in the midst of darkness, tribulation, danger, misery and despair.

For me, the “Bakery of Grace” was a very clear proof that our Christian hands can achieve a lot. The bakery was opened in the middle of the pandemic. Despite all the challenges, e.g. the massive increase in fuel prices, various unforeseen repairs, etc., the bakery has been performing well ever since and production has

almost doubled at times. Although there are still deficits, our friends and supporters continue to provide donations that enable us to continue producing good daily bread.

This is the grace that God sheds on us. It nourishes our hopes that the country will rise again.

We intend to launch a similar project as the next big step. This project will focus on various basic food items and other everyday products. We are talking about social markets (SOMAs). We will set up small supermarkets in some villages to supply the population right where they live. The products will be sold at fair and reasonable prices. The poorest families, who are registered with us according to certain criteria of social neediness, will receive a chip card with a prepaid shopping credit.



*Korbgemeinschaft* will buy certain goods in large quantities, some other products will gradually be added from local production by the residents themselves. Our local project partners will take steps to ensure that the costs remain manageable, e.g. by refilling food from large containers into smaller sales packages and transporting them in their own small truck. Some sales items can gradually be added by local small-scale and family enterprises, e.g. dairy products, flour products, jams, tomato paste, vinegar, oil, etc. Production with a sales outlet means employment and a certain income for those who will set up small businesses with a little start-up help from donors.

We intend to acquire various production and processing machines, including also used ones that are still in a good and well-functioning condition. We are grateful to all our friends and supporters for their advice, contacts and expertise in this area.

The advantage of SOMAs lies in their sustainability. They are intended to help poor families in the long run to help themselves by having a regular income. Jobs will be created by the production e.g. of agricultural goods, by processing and refining the products and also in the sales sector.



We have prepared a detailed establishment plan and are happy to share it attached to this letter.

Fortunately, we have already received positive feedback from some aid organizations.

We hope – and here we are again relying on the abundant grace of God! – that with the help of many supporters this important social project can start soon and can be quickly implemented. The local communities are looking forward to these SOMAs with great hope. They are determined to contribute to their success to the best of their abilities.

In this Holy Year of Hope, trusting in rich blessings to all people and all of God's creation also under the new Pope Leo IVX, I remain united with you in prayer,

in the risen Christ,

Fr. Hanna Ghoneim

