

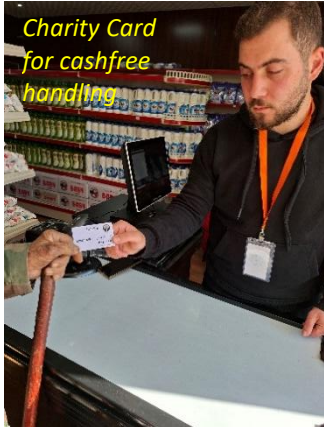
Dear friends and supporters,

It has been quite a while since I last wrote to you about Syria. I have kept waiting and hoping for a chance to tell you about some more encouraging developments. Unfortunately, however, the news keeps getting ever worse. Contrary to all hopes and expectations, the situation in Syria has not improved. The suffering of the population continues to increase. With the outbreak of the war in Iran, the outlook has become even bleaker, and it is to be feared that the misery will keep getting worse. The recent attacks by “uncontrolled” armed men in the Christian Suqailabiya (near Hama) have further increased the fear of Christians regarding future developments.

I do not intend to discuss the political and economic situation here, as it strikes me as confusing, contradictory, and insidious. No one knows the truth, and it is impossible to discern what is really happening. As always, the consequences of politics need to be borne and suffered by the population, and especially by the very poorest. One cannot rely on politics in Syria. But the humanitarian situation is relevant to us, and above all, the question of what we should do and what we can realistically do.

When I am in Syria, I realize—and am told by many persons whom I meet—that the impoverished people, who are so badly longing for peace, are now facing another famine. Hundreds of thousands of families in Syria today live either without any income at all, or in any case without a regular income, let alone an income sufficient for daily life. Even for those who have a job, salaries are not always paid at the end of the month, and sometimes one must wait for several months to get it. What they do receive is nowhere near enough to cover even the most basic living expenses. The price of electricity has risen by a factor of 100, from 6 to 600 SYP per kilowatt-hour. An average monthly salary cannot possibly cover these cost increases. Healthcare has deteriorated catastrophically. Even in public hospitals, treatment is no longer free, let alone of a reliable quality standard. What makes the situation even worse for everyone is the lack of jobs, even though there is certainly enough work to be done. Although economic sanctions have been lifted or have expired, the economic situation has nevertheless worsened. Due to the precarious security situation, virtually no one is willing to invest in the country. Even those who still run a business make very little profit. Therefore, they wind up their shops and try to emigrate abroad as quickly as possible. As there is no functioning legal system and new regulations spring up every day without a standard parliamentary approval process, many businesspeople feel uneasy and are reluctant to stay in their home country. This, in turn, means even higher unemployment rates. Due to the war in Iran, many Syrians working in the Gulf states—who have been supporting their relatives in Syria—will also be sent back home. However, no one wants to return to Syria, where there are hardly any jobs available. All in all, my conclusion is that life in Syria has become even harder recently. This is also confirmed by many of our project partners in Syria, who are constantly telling us about dramatic social cases. The big question I am asking myself is: What can we do about this?

When it comes to power politics and economics, we Christians can hardly make a difference. Political decisions are not in our hands. One thing, however, is up to us: a clear commitment to life. Christians seek life—a life in human dignity, in peace, safety, freedom, justice and joy.



My faith tells me: The salvation of Christians rests mainly within themselves, especially in their faith. And this is where the source of salvation for their fellow human beings is anchored. This trust is strengthened in me by the consistent and steadfast operation of the *Bakery of Grace* and in addition, more recently, by the Social Market (SOMA) project, with meanwhile already two SOMA shops in operation and two further ones in preparation. These and many further projects,

which are truly life-saving and highly valued by the local population, are made possible thanks to the loving care and dedication of our friends and supporters.



In the Church, we do not think of investments for the sake of returns. Our work is not profit-oriented but focused on life. Our motivation is rooted in these three virtues: love, faith, and hope. The Church's strength lies in faith. Amid all the hardship, the SOMA project is running successfully and has so far created an



astonishing impact. People are full of enthusiasm: donors, staff (in the sales shops and in the supply chain), and of course, especially the beneficiaries. The idea behind the SOMA project is that the very poor can receive the bare necessities for free thanks to proceeds from fair sales to those who are better off. Food is essential for life. The product range of SOMA stores is intended to gradually include goods that can be produced, processed and refined locally thanks to agricultural projects and small family-run businesses. *Korbgemeinschaft*



seeks to create such forms of meaningful employment opportunities, especially for young people and for women. Of course, we expect certain deficits in the initial phase. We intend to cover these as best as possible through donations. At SOMA stores, everyone can decide for himself/herself which everyday goods make the most sense for the family's specific situation. In this way, SOMAs raise the granting of support to a new level of human dignity —provided at eye level, with a high degree of self-determination. What impoverished people desire above all, is a form of help empowering them in the long run to help themselves. To be given an opportunity to survive thanks to the work of their own hands.



Decoration of candles for various ceremonies

We see numerous opportunities here to gradually create meaningful, sustainable work. There are many talented, competent, and very hardworking people who can achieve a great deal if they are given some form of start-up support.

We kindly ask our friends to help us keep the basket full. We rely heavily on the love and compassion of our friends and supporters. The donations from the basket give the dedicated local

helper teams of *Korbgemeinschaft* a great deal of confidence and courage to persevere and continue to offer comfort and strength to their brothers and sisters in need.

We Christians believe in the Resurrection and we cherish life. Life without love, without self-sacrifice, without hope, and without faith cannot endure. When we see great suffering, we are called to stand up for and defend life. Ultimately, all life is a gift from God. We are merely mediators and channels of His grace.

I wish you all a blessed Feast of the Lord's Resurrection, filled with joy, grace, and love.

Your Fr. Hanna

Easter 2026



We cordially thank you and wish you a Happy Easter!