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## **Mission to the Gaza Strip**

**Wednesday 5 February 2020 - 1st day**

**11:25 Departure from Genoa – Music for Peace headquarters**

**19:00 Arrival in Tel Aviv**

**20:30 Arrival in Jerusalem**

**20:00 Dinner and return to accommodation**

At 8:30 we are in the office, like a normal working day. Usual uniform, usual backpacks, usual moment of concentration. We are ready, everything is ready. The trip to the airport will be short, we leave from Genoa.

At 10:30 am we say goodbye to those present and check-in for our flight.

Everything passes as fast as in a fragment of accelerated film. Take-off, stop in Rome, second take-off, second landing: Ben Gurion Airport. Tel Aviv. It's 19:00 local time. The phone rings. It is the Farnesina. They advise against taking trips to Palestine, the situation

is serious. We know about it. We know that this climate of tension has lasted for years, too many years. We leave the airport. We are greeted by Samer, our local trusted driver. We get in the car. At 20:30 we are in Jerusalem, we drop our backpacks in our room. We call our contact Gazawi, we inform him that even tomorrow we could enter the Gaza Strip. We also inform the Italian Consulate of our arrival. Tomorrow at 09:00 the Vice Consul Federico Dimonopoli will wait for us for a short meeting.

It's late. We grab a bite to eat near where we will sleep. A sandwich, a drink. A small tour of old Jerusalem. We think about tomorrow and we think about when we will pass by Erez. We will travel the long, gloomy and aseptic corridor to reach the warm Land of Olives.

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## **Thursday 6 February 2020 - 2nd day**

**06:00 Wake up**

**09:00 Appointment at the Italian Consulate**

**11:30 Arrival at Erez**

**12:30 Entrance to Gaza Strip**

It's 6 a.m. We're already dressed. We're on the road with our backpacks. We enter to a small restauration for a quick breakfast. We learn that during the night, here in Jerusalem, there has been heavy disorder with an outcome of 10 injuries and a victim in Jenin, and another in Hebron. We have a coffee, people speak of deaths and injuries as if they were abstractions, material, things. In this land, men, women and children have become accustomed to violence and loss of human life. It's absurd this reversal of values. At 9 a.m. we are welcomed by the Consular Federico Dimonopoli. We received serious recommendations, the political situation is tense. We reassure the Consular. We have always worked with maximum attention and caution. Time has come to say our salutations. Once more our backpacks are ready. Direction: Erez. It's 11:30 a.m. We're in front of the border. We enter. The start of the controls. Mentally we strengthen our patience. After a few minutes we are given back our documents and backpacks. With a wave of the hand the soldier in front of us indicates us to move forward. We proceed to a sterile hallway until we reach the first Palestinian check point. Passport control. A few words. We move on. Second Palestinian check. Here the control is unexpectedly long. Documents and backpacks are again checked. A lot of questions. A bit of a wait. Finally we proceed. It's 1 p.m. We're in Gaza. Our lungs open and our hearts slow down. We're greeted by Anas and Issaq. Pats on the back. Special packages. Full of emotions. We're home. Yes. We're home. In the background, the deafening sound of the drones. Just in time to exchange a few words with our brothers and to overcome the sounds of the drones, are the harsh sounds of two planes. Right after, two explosions. "Welcome to Gaza" We get in the car and we arrive at our base camp, The Holy Family Church, we re-embrace Abuna Yousef, Sister Delfina ( Mother Teresa Order) and we meet Abuna Gabriel. We put down our backpacks. We set up a technical office, working immediately on some photos and the diary. We go back to the community room and have lunch all together. It's 3 p.m. and towards the border direction we perceive bombing. 4:20 p.m. from Shejaiya, very close to the church, another bombing. The afternoon is marked by the sounds of drones. This is the life of Gaza.

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## **Friday 7 February 2020 - 3rd day**

**Ore 08:00 a.m. wake up**

**Ore 02:00 p.m. We leave for Rafah to reach our Palestinian family**

**Ore 06:00 p.m. return to the Holy Family Church**

Friday. Today's mission progress is in a state of deadlock. Everything is on hold, the Arab world is on holidays. At 8:00 a.m. we are on our feet, it's a luxury. We stay in the room because having time on our hands we can sort out the diaries and photos. We touch base with our Egyptian contact, but no news. The only reassuring messages are that something could move between Saturday and Sunday. For now, the container is stationary. We plan two site inspections for tomorrow: the Medical Center in Khan Younis and the General Union, an association that deals with disabilities, both are partnership with us. We try to get in touch with the office in Genoa and exchange news with each other. It's 02:00 p.m. when we pull the Holy Family Church gate behind us. In front of us Issaq, we will go together to Anas. Today we will spend our first day with our Palestinian family. The car starts. We cross various roads. We pass through Gaza City. We ask Issaq to stop at the Old Port. We get out. We look at the sea and salute a friend. We are late for the good wishes, but he appreciated our brief meeting. The sea ripples. We get back in the car. With the sea on the right we continue on our way. Some buildings, some palm trees. The signs of destruction are always present to remind us that we are still in the Gaza Strip. When we get home and have lunch together: with our brother Anas and our grandchildren, now grown up. Together we talk and try to briefly plan the next distributions, which we hope will begin soon. The afternoon flies by. We are already on our way back when the sky begins to darken. When we reach the Holy Family Church we remain in the company of the Abuna. We exchange some opinions on the current geopolitical situation. We continue to chat and we understand that there may be interest in creating Music for Peace Gaza, managed by a local contact. The fathers, the abuna, could give us the necessary space. The project would be geared towards cooperation for development rather than emergency intervention. We will elaborate further on this later. We go back to the room. The next few days will certainly be full. A thought goes out to our many friends, whose lives are tied to this land, to neighbouring lands ... and to strong and sincere ideals. The feeling of equality and justice can only bind us, forever.

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## **Saturday 8 February 2020 -4th day**

**8:00 a.m. Wake Up**

**03:00 p.m. Gaza City**

**06:00 p.m. Back home**

Today the alarm clock is not set for sunrise. Saturday is still a day of festivity, at least for half of us. It's 8 a.m. and we are already prepared to carry out the routine phone calls to have an update on the course of the container. Unfortunately, there is no news. Same as yesterday. We are still at a standstill. We hope that it is only for the fact that we are still at an initial stage. We listen to excuses and vague motivations. It's still not clear, the exact date on leaving the port. We have

chosen, still for this Saturday, model Zen. The sky is completely overcast, the temperature not very mild. Minutes pass and it starts to rain. Increasingly stronger now. The streets of Gaza are surely not ready to accommodate this heavy rain, as the water level rises in a few minutes. We all eat together with the Abuna. The phone rings and for a logistic problem we must postpone our visit to The Medical Center of Khan Younis and The General Union. We decide to travel to Gaza City, not far from where we are staying. The usual buildings, same streets. There are no changes from one year to the next. Signs of destruction are quite clear. To the old structural collapses filled with bullet holes, there are newer additions. It's a warning for civilians "Remember you live in the Gaza Strip, remember that the future does not depend on you." Around 04:00 p.m., we perceive, from a distance, thundering sounds. We proceed home. We are quickly informed that there have been explosions along the border, approximately, in the middle of the Strip. Seemingly calm, there is a sense of tension within the civilians. The continuous psychological pressure hits even stronger, it's pressure is felt all over. You don't know what can happen from one minute to the next, a drone, a sonic bomb, a real bomb. February 8th 2020, this is the life of Gaza. Meanwhile, as we reflect on the difficulties of everyday life in this open air prison, we prepare to spend the night, sharing with our friends and Palestinian brothers, this limbo.

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## **Sunday 9 February 2020 – 5th day**

**08:00 a.m. wake up**

**10:30 a.m. meeting with the transport company**

**01:00 p.m. meeting at the Ministry of Health**

**03:00 p.m. lunch**

**05:00 p.m. telephone contacts for container updates**

It's 8:00. Straight away we prepare all the documentation needed for the container. We have a coffee and eat a bite of bread and then out onto the street with our folders. At 10:30 we enter the offices of the transport company, the only one in the whole of the Gazawi territory. Our intent is to make agreements and prepare the process for the withdrawal of the container from the border to our warehouses. The negotiation is quite long, as always. We leave, already tired from the rivers of words both heard and said. Meanwhile, in the Genoa office, the secretaries draw up further documentation which the customs have requested. Our Embassy is closely following the port offices. In any case, we are waiting for news. We get in the car with the Ministry of Health. At 13:30 we meet the Director General of the Ministry. A long meeting where the lists of medicines and medical supplies are scrutinized. We agree that the verification of the materials will be carried out within our warehouses. The authorization is made official. At 15:00 we are back on the street. We have another quick bite to eat and return home. The afternoon is dedicated entirely to phone calls and various contacts to achieve the only goal which we are interested in: getting the container inside the Gaza Strip. In the late afternoon nearly all the documents seem to be ready. We look forward to the last one: the coordination for the passage of the container from the Rafah border, with the Red Half Moon, which seems to have been in hiding for the last two weeks. The

evening is punctuated by continuous phone calls. We begin to prepare the diary and to work on the photos. In our hearts we doubt that we will receive news of the container's departure, but we live in hope. Nerves are still stretched, but something is beginning to move.

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## **Monday 10 February 2020 – 6th day**

**08:00** wakeup call

**10:30** renewal of permits

**11:30** cognitive meeting with a new association

**14.00** lunch

**15:00** return home

This night we are awakened by very loud bangs. We go up on the roof of the structure where we are hosted. Bombs explode. Red orange glows, smoke, explosions. Some lights come on in neighbouring houses. Apparent normality, apparent calm in discomfort and inhumanity. We document with photos and videos what happens on a normal February night. We stay awake in the common room, we try to connect to the internet to understand what is happening. There's no line. It's difficult to go back to bed and turn our back on these events. It is now dawn and sleep has the better of us. A few hours are struck by the clock hands. It's 8:00. Usual alarm clock, usual coffee, usual contacts. On the Egyptian side, we continue with absurd requests and rebounds. We suffer on, but with vigilant attention. We go down the street and head to renew our permits to stay in the Gaza Strip. We enter the designated offices. After having checked our documents, in the end we are issued with the necessary authorisations. We can stay in Gaza until the end of February. The tiredness of the night before begins to take its toll, mixed with the constant tension that you breathe on the streets. We are invited to an organization with which we had no previous contact. The association deals with cancer patients. It is not easy to deal with these diseases anywhere in the world, even less here, where everything is missing, especially from a medical point of view. We talk for a long time and try to understand how we can be useful. In the future we should be able to collaborate, Inshallah. Around 14:00 we have lunch. We're not so hungry. The day is marked by the sound of explosions from every point on the Strip. It is 15:00 a louder roar. The ferment of civilians begins. Concern rises, men and women are heard arguing about a possible massive attack. While in Italy we talk about football and the San Remo Festival, here people talk about life or death. Different points of view from different latitudes. It is late afternoon and we go home. We continue to insist on receiving news of the container. It is really important that this material enters as soon as possible: medicines and medical consumables, all essential. We have dinner. It is now dark. We work on the photos and the diary. We wonder what the night will bring. Good night men, women and little children. Let's hope it's going to be a calm night.

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## **Tuesday 11 February 2020 – 7th day**

**08:00 a.m. wakeup call and countless telephone contacts**

**01.40 p.m. lunch**

**06.30 p.m. return home**

The morning is a swirl of phone calls. Continuous ringing, continuously dialling phone numbers. The same fate for the office in Genoa. An insistent barrage of communications. The goal is to retrieve the container at least within the next 48 hours. Cairo, Alexandria, Gaza, Genoa, Rome. The flow of communication is incessant. We've run up a blind alley, and the escape route must be found immediately. In the meantime, time is running out. A moment we are close to solving the problem and a second later, we have to start again from the beginning. The minutes slip away, the hours run. The tension inside the Strip is increasingly strained. The material needs to cross Rafah as soon as possible. It's about 01:00 p.m. when the long-awaited permit from the Egyptian Red Cross arrives into our possession. It was a joint effort between us and our institutions. With this letter all the pieces should be in place. We do not exult however, not yet, we will have absolute certainty only when the container crosses the blue gate of the Alexandria port exit gate. We leave for Gaza City. Even if it's late we have lunch with the members of yet another association that we haven't met before, just like yesterday. They talk about their project and their willingness to collaborate together with us. We say goodbye to new friends and make headway in the direction of Khan Younis where we will inspect of the Medical Centre with which we are in partnership. The Centre is well structured and the patients are many. The staff is excited to be able to receive, hopefully soon, medicines and medical supplies. Speaking with us they demonstrate their desire to continue our collaboration and indeed they provide a long list of medical equipment and machinery that they are in need of. We already have a lot of work to do for the next mission. We hope to be able to satisfy all their requests. It is 06:30 p.m. when we get home. We start the usual evening ritual: processing photos and drafting our daily log. Its 10:00 p.m. when we finish our video conference with the volunteers meeting in Genova. Our thoughts are with home. 10:04 p.m. two explosions light up the dark sky of Gaza. They're loud and near. The tension in this strip of land is not easing at all. We await the night. We await the day.

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## **Wednesday 12 February 2020 – 8th day**

**08:00 a.m. wakeup call and countless telephone calls**

**01.00 p.m. UHCC meeting**

**04.30 p.m. return home**

The day starts as usual. The difference from the other mornings is the low flying drones and their annoying metallic hum. As always, we start with various telephone calls and countless contacts

with Egypt. All the documents seem to have arrived. We almost rejoice, but soon afterwards we realise that it's only fog. There is still one piece of paper, one number missing. At the same time we pay for the guarantee letter without which it is not possible to transit on Egyptian soil. The morning flies by. The container is still in the port. Inshallah, we will wait some more. At 13:00 we arrive at the UHCC and meet Dr. Raja, head of communications. The hospital is willing to re-establish its partnership with Music for Peace. We talk for a long time and we make discuss the precise rules that must be respected to keep our partnership on firm ground. On all points they agree with us. More work and commitment for the next convoy. From this morning until now the sound of drones is continuous. After hours and hours of this indescribable sound, not too loud, but subtle and continuous, ones hearing is put to the test. There are no words that can describe this sound. It is not the noisy roar of a bomb. It is a massive and full-bodied constant buzz that worms its way into your head. Around 16:00 we arrive at the warehouse. We clean and prepare it. Everything is ready to receive the material: the generic parcel unloading area, a delimited area for each hospital and association, the work area for documents and parcel checklists. Here we are ready. We hope that tomorrow Egypt will be ready too. We go up to the room, accompanied as always by the annoying hum. We haven't had a break for quite a while. We have dinner. The night will be long ... just hours of waiting.

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## **Thursday 13 February 2020 - 9th day**

**08:00 a.m. Wakeup call**

**02.00 p.m. Lunch**

**05.00 p.m. Return home**

The first moments of the morning are dedicated to straightening out our uniforms and the room. Next, for the ninth time in the past nine days, with phones in hand we try to get some news. We follow the latest verifications step by step. At 9:30 the container is out. Our hearts pound. Whatever happens next we are one step closer to the border! The truck leaves towards El Arish. The kilometers to drive are infinite, at least 600. The road that awaits the container is one of the most complicated and now militarized in the whole country. Our thoughts and hopes are to get to El Arish tonight. The road begins to pass under the wheels. Asphalt, then stones, then asphalt, then clay. A race against time. In the meantime, we go to lunch at 14:00 with some old friends. We talk at length about the political situation, of how precarious life here is and the total lack of security. The tension, our friends explain, is palpable, you breathe it, you touch it, you see it. Despite this, the almost total inner tranquility of the population is absurd. People have become so used to bombs, attacks, death. "Children until a few years ago as soon as they heard an F16 burst into tears. Now children when they hear an F16 look up to the sky in salutation or make funny faces", one of our friends tells us. Our hearts are pierced, deeply. The children are totally used to the noises and roars of war. A 6 year old in Italy doesn't even know what an F16 is, and rightly so.

Injustice is to steal the childhood from entire generations. The conversation continues, but our brains remains blocked, suspended in the face of all this evil. We say goodbye and return home. We receive constant updates. The container nears Suez. It arrives at the Ponte della Pace at 18:00. The race for today ends abruptly here. The tunnels to pass the canal are open from 9:00 to 18:00. Nothing to do. Tomorrow is Friday and therefore everything is closed. We end the day without any sign that the perpetual sound of drones will wane, which just like yesterday accompanied us throughout our day. We can't get off to sleep. We look at the sky, the same stars that watch over the container also watch over us... and all the little children.

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## **Friday 14 February 2020 – 10th day**

### **WAITING**

Our good morning is punctuated by a very noisy sixty minutes. Sixty minutes marked and beaten by explosions. From 6:30 to 7:30 am. Good morning Gaza! The desire is to inform the highest number of people about what happens daily in these 40 kilometres of land. We would like it to be clear that we write about bombs and explosions, drones and the evil that is all around us, not to make us super heroes, but to make you knowledgeable people. On the contrary, we ask you to share the diaries as much as possible so that the daily lives of these women, men and children is disseminated. People who are denied fundamental rights. Even the most basic: the right to health, the right to food, the right to home, the right to work ... in this portion of land, among the few olive trees and palm trees left, civilians simply yearn to have THE RIGHT TO LIFE.

The container is on its way. It is still travelling through stretches of desert. We hope that it can arrive as close as possible to Rafah by evening. Today is Friday, as you well know, everything is closed. A public holiday to all effects. There should be only 24 hours left to wait. More explosions in the afternoon. A persistent warning that reminds you who you are, where you live and what your life depends on. The container is halted at a military check point, ordinary administration for insecure Egypt. Various misunderstandings, absurd requests. Time flows. We can continue on our way. It is evening now. The truck stops in El Arish. We make contact with the local Red Half Moon, which seems not to have received coordination from Cairo yet. Whatever it may be. In our hearts we already knew that we would stop here today, and perhaps even tomorrow. Inchallah.

That rights are rights for all

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## **Sunday 15 February 2020 – 11th day**

### **STILL WAITING**

Saturday. Same script as yesterday. The explosions give way to the return of the irritating drone sound and the passage of F16s. Calls to gather news on the container, no new news in return. We



have reached our limit. We can't wait any longer. Our nerves are taut as bowstrings ready to fire arrows. We continue to call everyone, anyone. The container cannot still be blocked in EL Arish. It only has to travel those 40 kilometres of empty dirt road and enter, make the crossing, go through that huge gate that delimits the border between Egypt and Palestine. Our brains are like going mad. The fury on the phone is devastating, nagging, unrestrained. It's 15:00 when we leave our room to go to lunch with the representatives of an association that deals with workers' rights. It is exhausting to listen. Especially because the workers here don't not know in the least what it means to have rights ... it is quite understandable for civilians who, as we know, DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO ANY RIGHTS. In the future it will be possible to start projects together, above all on awareness and training. It is late afternoon. Calls follow, one after other. We go back to the room. The phone is ringing. Our eyes narrow slightly, our fists tighten and rise, our mouths widen into smiles ... the voice resounds a loud sharp YES. The transit permit from El Arish to Rafah has arrived. The amount of time required for the trip seems infinite. EL Arish is behind us. The container is finally in Rafah, on the Egyptian side of the border. It's not over yet. Tomorrow the military will perform the final checks on the material. As always, we don't rejoice because everything in this land is the opposite of anything considered normal. We are close. This is in any case a great achievement. Tonight the truck will remain where it is, hopefully for the last time, on Egyptian territory. Gino and the driver will sleep on board the vehicle and tomorrow morning ... Inchallah ... only Inchallah.

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### **Sunday 16 February 2020 – 16th day**

**08:00 am Wakeup call, prelude to infinite waiting**

**03:00 pm Rafah border**

**05:00 pm The container is on Palestinian territory**

**06:15 pm Arrival of the container at the warehouses**

The usual wait starts the day. It's Sunday. We are unable to make direct contact with Gino, the border area has the telephone links cut off. We are tense. We wait. Our gaze is in the direction of the phone screens to keep a check on the time and incoming calls. The morning passes. Our Palestinian contacts on the Egyptian side of the border inform us that Gino has entered the border area. We decide to go to Rafah. We cross the whole strip. The journey seems very long. The roads certainly do not allow any sort of speed while driving. It's 03:00 pm, we too are on the border. Our desire is to reach the container and follow its swap over onto another truck. "Foreign" vehicles cannot enter the Gaza Strip. Permission is requested for Anas and Stefano to enter. A green light comes from the Palestinian side. We then request coordination with the Egyptian military. We are stopped. We wait. Coordination arrives: Anas crosses over onto Egyptian territory. Stefano is stopped, he is denied passage. All in all, we are morally happy to remain with our feet on Palestinian soil. The problems change, but security is precarious, if not totally absent in both countries. On the Gazawi side there are bombings, explosions, drones and F16 in flight every day. On the Egyptian side there is a total lack of coherence, of personal security and we don't go further. Egypt is not a safe country, but to find this out we needed to arrive at the ultimate evil. To know that Egypt is not safe, we needed Giulio. And we hope we don't need a reminder with Zacky.

It's 05:00 pm. Now our hearts pump a thousand beats a minute. We are happy. The container passes. It's right there in front of us. The emotion is real. To see this truck here on this ground, months of work were needed at the gates of the Gaza Strip. It was a really difficult mission, an uphill climb. However we managed to pull it off. It is 06:00 pm and we are witnessing the start of the first check by the customs of the competent authority. The material is no longer in transit, and this check is a fair one. The documents, above all, are scrutinized. Everything is in order. We proceed. We are inside. 07:15 the container is in front of the Holy Family Church. We have arrived at our destination. The representatives of the Ministry of Health, who will perform the last check on the convoy, are waiting us. The night will be long, almost infinite. We open the doors of the container. We start offloading. We are alarmed by how everything was reloaded after the various checks carried out by the Egyptian side. Without any sense whatsoever. We lovingly and respectfully remove cartons, packs of incontinence pads and medical equipment piece by piece. Ministerial executives open what has not already been opened. They look on. They verify. They read. The warehouse fills up. Everything is divided by hospital and association. We don't stop. It's 00:30 am. Exhausted we sit down. Hands on knees. Sweaty despite not being hot. We feel this happy tiredness pervading muscles and bones. We will continue tomorrow. Now we go back to our room. Sleep arrives in seconds.

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## **Monday / Tuesday 17 / 18 February 2020 – 13th / 14th day**

### **07:00 am Wakeup**

The night was long, sleep was short. Today will be an endless day, but with little to recount. Drones are the habitual soundtrack that fill every hour of the day. Right away we leave the room and go down to the warehouse. We finish unloading the container. We sort all the parcels, dividing them by hospital and association. It took just a few words to write this, but to finish this specific job it took the whole day. We checked everything parcel by parcel. The flashbacks are many. The enthusiasm of organizing everything in the Genoa office. The many hands that sorted, packed and wrote packing lists. The palettes of parcels on the forecourt of the Music for Peace headquarters. And now ... it's all here. In Gaza. With help we have downloaded the affection and love of hundreds of thousands of people who together believed in and walked towards a single goal: real and concrete help. It is evening now. We eat and immediately afterwards go to bed. From now on the work will be hard and continuous. The night hours pass quickly and soon we are on our feet again. It's Tuesday. Drones are omnipresent. It's nagging, indescribable. We get ready and immediately go down to the warehouse. We meet with the representatives of the Ministry of Health who officially give permission to precede with the distribution. So we start calling the various contacts. Tomorrow the first lot of material to be delivered will be that destined for the Al Shifa Hospital, after that the Medical Centre in Khan Younis on Thursday, and Friday we'll be at Ahli Arab Hospital. This week is crucial for the consignment of medicines and medical equipment. Our organisational work goes on. We contact the associations and coordinate appointments for the delivery of the materials destined for them. It is 15:50, a very strong if not too close explosion,

most likely from the direction of the sea. Immediately afterwards the ears resume their addiction to the sound of drones. People are in turmoil. The tension is increasingly breathable. The news is that even on the Israeli side, attention and tension are at the maximum. Once we have got our minds back on the job in hand we proceed with scheduling the various phases of the distribution. It's evening. We eat. Healthy tiredness slowly comes down upon us. We go to sleep early. Tomorrow ... is already waiting.

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### **Wednesday 19 February 2020 – 15th day**

**Ore 8:30 am wakeup**

**Ore 9:30 am warehouse**

**Ore 04:00 pm Lunch**

**Ore 10:30 am first distribution – Al Shifa Hospital**

At 08:30 we are on our feet. A quick breakfast and we immediately get our uniforms on. It's 09:30 when we get down to the warehouse. After about an hour, the representatives of the Ministry arrive and together with them, parcel by parcel, we load the truck with boxes of medicines, hospital consumables and medical equipment. Without too much speed because both us and them carefully want to carefully check that the material to be loaded is expressly destined for the relative hospital. Each individual box has already been assigned, back in the headquarters in Genoa, and marked with a sticker that bears the association/hospital initials and progressive numbers. We arrive at Al Shifa Hospital. Reverse operation. The unloading, as always undertaken in our presence. Once this is done, we go inside the structure to sign the donation deeds, in which every single piece delivered is noted. Those present are enthusiastic about what has been received. In an atmosphere of joy we sign and stamp all the documents. We say goodbye and get in the car. We are back in the warehouse. After a while the Sisters of Mother Teresa arrive. They look at what is intended for them. Their eyes are full of love. What is needed by the children and the elderly in their care is right there in front of them. We agree on the delivery date: Friday. At 16:00 we sit at the table and have lunch. Hunger was on the rise. We go back to the warehouse. We sort out the materials that will be loaded onto the vehicles tomorrow for the next distribution. We go up to the room. We have a coffee. We elaborate photos and write our diary. Without having dinner, given the fact that we had lunch in the late afternoon, we take to our beds and rest ourselves ...

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### **Thursday 20 February 2020 – 16th day**

**08:30 am wake up**

**09:30 am warehouse**

**10:00 am contact with Michele Giorgio**

**11:30 am arrival of hospital managers in Khan Younis**

**12:30 am check material**

**02:00 pm distribution at the hospital**

**05:30 pm return to the warehouse**

8:30 am, back on our feet. Breakfast, which becomes essential in these days of distribution, in fact, lunchtime is getting further and further away. We go down to the warehouse. It's 09:30 am. We immediately begin to sort out the materials that will be delivered by us today. At 10:00 am the phone rings. It is Michele Giorgio, journalist for Il Manifesto and Nena News. He asks many questions both about the intervention we are carrying out and the general situation within the Strip. We tell everything, down to the smallest detail, accompanied in the background by the dark and nagging noise of the drones, demonstrating what we recount. Four are flying over the sky above this morning. We say goodbye to Michele. We continue with our work. At 11:30 am the managers of Khan Younis' Watan Medical Team arrive. Together we check the materials, package by package. One by one the boxes are loaded onto the vehicle. After the clearance of our packing lists we leave for Khan Younis. At 02:00 pm we are in front of the hospital structure. The unloading of materials is documented. Package by package the material enters their general storerooms. We have lunch with the hospital staff and talk for a long time about the effort required to gather and delivery the consignment and the meaning that this activity has. We cover various points including the essential respect of certain rules and the organisation of the next intervention. Everyone is enthusiastic, willing to collaborate again and also to provide logistical support to the next convoy. It's 04:30 pm when we leave Khan Younis to return to Gaza City. Even today, drones do not leave the sky. 05:30 pm we are in the warehouse. We rearrange everything, materials and documents, in order to be ready tomorrow for the scheduled distribution: Ahli Arab Hospital in Shejaiya. It's now dark. We prepare the photos and diary. Lulled by the sound of drones, which has now colonised our brains again (and not only ...) we close our eyes. See you tomorrow.

Citizens of the World

## **Saturday 22 February 2020 – 18th day**

**10:00 meeting with the Governor of Gaza City**

**08:30 wake up**

Today is Saturday, a partially festive day for Muslims. Our alarm clock remains at 8:30. At 10:00 we meet the Governor of Gaza City, Dr. Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja. He already knows the association and our way of working. We delve into the true meaning of the convoy, we highlight that every single piece contained inside the container represents a heart, a heart of a private and common citizen who thought of Gaza. The meeting takes place at the Saja Center Cerebral Palsy association in the presence of the General Manager Mr. Bassam Al Batta and Dr. Renad Al-Helou. Together with them we prepare all the documentation necessary for the arrival of the materials, which will take

place tomorrow. Incontinence pads, sanitary towels and nappies will be delivered to them. The material is destined for the elderly, the disabled, women and children. Around 15:00 we say goodbye and head back to our room. There are few people on the streets of Gaza City right now. Tension is a condition that cannot abandon these simple people. We arrive. Quickly into the warehouse to prepare what will be loaded tomorrow for the Saja Center. The evening slips away. Tomorrow will again be an important day for more distribution.

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## **Sunday 23 February 2020 – 19th day**

### **There is no timetable, it's a day of violence**

We are on our feet at the usual time. We immediately go down to the warehouse to prepare things. We hear the people outside raise their tone of voice. Restlessness, agitation, despair. We go out into the street and understand straight away that something serious has happened. We try to learn more, but maybe it would have been better not to. Yet another tragedy for Khan Younis. We see the pictures. The Israeli military raided the Strip on board a bulldozer. Machine gun volleys, a man falls, hit, dead. 7 boys try to recover the lifeless body on the lawn. That dead man is not a mannequin. That dead man was a man, a boy, a husband and a son. Impossible to win against a bulldozer. Drones begin to fly across the Strip, back and forth. They are so many. We sigh deeply. We arrive at the Mabarrat Phalastina Association, to which we donated materials yesterday. We hear explosions in the distance. We visit the facility. It's impeccable, the operators with maximum professionalism and care look after the little ones. We are in fact in the pediatric section. With pleasure we spend some time with the girls and boys of the center. They are all children who have very serious problems, malformations, genetic diseases, paraplegias. By looking around us we evaluate and document the needs to be met. With the next convoy, our hope is to make life, already difficult in this place, as dignified as possible for the children of the center. We go home. We are accompanied by drones. We arrive in the room. At 21:00 delirium breaks out. The sky red, intermittent bombing and yet more bombings. The silence is pierced by explosions. This will be a long night. We go out with the utmost attention. On the phones, messages arrive from Genoa, on the news channel we catch the nighttime news: "Israel: raid against Islamic Jihad in Syria and Gaza". Friends and relatives ask if we are okay. We send voice messages so our voices can be heard, but the sound of F16, drones and bombings cannot be covered over. The Gaza Strip: 2 million 200 people. Is it possible to organize a raid on an entire population? We document what is happening. The sound of violence is bitter, unfair. A long night. An infinite night.

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## **Monday 24 February 2020 – 20th day**

### **More violence, all day long**

For more than 72 hours we have been living our days in a fast motion, as if nothing can be at rest. This morning we are visiting the Ahli Arab Hospital, which has been assigned its part of the shipment of medicines, equipment and medical consumables. The structure is absolutely functional and efficient. Extremely qualified and highly specialised staff. Patients are treated without political or religious distinction, free of charge. We visit the wards, after which we draw up the partnership for the next intervention. The sky does not forebode anything good. The drones seem to go crazy. In any case, we continue with the day's work. We arrive at the musical association directed by Arab Mohamed, the backbone of the Ramallah Conservatory. We listen to the children play. A surreal situation. From outside, the drones that accompany the passion and skill of these little boys and girls. In our mind a thousand wishes for a bright future ... for a good life for these little creatures. We agree a partnership with Arab. The centre will guarantee 10 free annual courses for children and young people who want to try their hand at music and have a passion for it, but who would not usually have the possibility to do so mostly due to the absolute precariousness of the family situation. In addition, free places will also be offered in the kindergarten, and as before based on learning music.

03:11 pm four thunderous explosions from Shejaia.

03:19 pm F16s pass over our heads, incoming and outgoing missiles

03:27 pm again explosions, very loud roars

03:29 pm the drones seem to have gone mad, there are many of them. Still roars and tremors

03:32 pm drones flying even lower

For a moment we can't understand where the explosions are coming from, we are practically surrounded. We decide to go home. The afternoon is spent in suspended animation, unreal. It is 21:26, the delirium is unleashed again. We will soon be going home. However the people here cannot get out. They remain prisoners in a strip of land where tons of evil explode daily. It is not possible to begin to imagine what this imprisonment means ... this difficult prison to which one is condemned at the exact moment in which one is born and opens ones eyes and lungs here. Here in the land of olive trees, in the land of religions, in this now lifeless land.

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## **Tuesday 25 February 2020 – 21th day**

**11:00 am visit and delivery to the General Union**

**08:30 am wake up**

**03:00 pm return to the warehouse**

**05:00 pm drones and F16**

We are awake at the usual time, it's 8:30 am. Breakfast and then immediately to work on photos and the diary entry for the day before. We try to publish on social media. It is not easy this morning, the line is precarious. After several attempts, we succeed. We go down to the warehouse. We arrange the materials. We leave for Khan Younis, the veteran association we will visit today and distribute to. We arrive at the General Union Disabled Center. We are greeted by a wave of warm affection. We have had a partnership with this center for a long time and the work

they do has always been important and concrete. We stay with them for a long time and staff also arrive at intervals. The joy all around is indescribable. We improvise a direct facebook to show the world this reality. The first attempt fails. The line is increasingly precarious. A few moments later we succeed! Since yesterday the sky breaths. The momentary suspension of hostilities seems to be lasting. All this until 03:00 pm when we perceive an F16 flying over the area and immediately afterwards various drones return. The road home is accompanied by a dark and mechanical sound. It's 05:00 pm. We are now in the warehouse. We have dinner quite early. There is still a lot of work to be done and the stay in Gaza is likely to be extended by at least a week. Let's start working the photos. Our gaze falls on the cover photo of the Music for Peace facebook page ... we reflect on these words "El Mundo cambia con tu ejemplo, no con tu opinion". These are not random words. They are a handful of words, which have even more depth in this moment, in this land. A world in which there should be less "likes" and more active commitment, would be nice ... true ... contact and exchanges with humanity, for humanity. Becomea volunteer, dedicate yourself to people. It's not an excessive commitments, a couple of hours a week are enough. Think if each of us were to dedicate this arc of time throughout our lives. Think about how many things we could achieve on the net and also together. How much good and how much love we could express. How much concrete help we would be able to convey. So let's close ... THE WORLD CHANGES WITH YOUR EXAMPLE NOT WITH YOUR OPINION.

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### **Wednesday 26 February 2020 – 22th day**

Alarm clock, breakfast, warehouse. The three main words of a typical morning. We line up in pole position the material that will have to be loaded today for distribution. We close and head for Gaza City. It's 11:00 am when we arrive at the Palestine Avenir for Childhood Foundation. A centre that looks after the disabled. Unfortunately, the number of disabled people within the Gaza Strip is very high. Inside the institute, the staff works and takes care of adults and children suffering from very serious diseases, but also many semi-paralyzed, paralyzed and amputated civilians, a result of the many conflicts. It's obvious that the aseptic reasoning of governments is to want to create mutilated people or people who are not self-sufficient. This creates more expense for the enemy government. A dangerous thought, created ad hoc to do harm. We go to eat. A quick meal. We go back to the warehouse, load the material prepared this morning and depart for the distribution. We arrive at the Caritas centre. The staff mainly deal with orphans. A joyful environment, despite all the hell that surrounds the structure ... the area ... the entire Strip. We go back to the warehouse and prepare for the next distribution, house-to-house, tent by tent. The little afternoon that remains passes, as well as the evening ... and the night.

### **Thursday 27 February 2020 – 23th day**

### **Fryday 28 February 2020 – 24th day**

Today and tomorrow will be two very peaceful days as far as distributions are concerned. In the morning we arrive in Nusseirat, we meet some PFLP representatives. A couple of hours of intense listening regarding the current political situation within the Strip and beyond. The economic, social and social disadvantage of the whole population. One of the most tragic historical moments ever

experienced. We go back to the warehouse and begin to prepare the packages carefully, with all the love in the world. The day passes and ends like this, with the drones that keep the mind occupied, that keep the memory alive. When we open our eyes it's morning. It's Friday. Festive day. We stay with dear friends, with brothers. Starting tomorrow, we will start distributing family by family. It will be three days very stressed and charged both physically, but we are also certain emotionally. The mission is coming to an end. An intense month in which we have experienced more than ever the daily reality of these people who have learned to survive with the unbearable. See you tomorrow.

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## **Saturday 29 February 2020 – 25th day**

At 9:30 we are already loading the vehicle with which we are going to distribute aid to the "Butterfly Children". We will visit each of their families. It will be a very hard day, especially as we will come into close contact with the physical and mental pain of small creatures. At 10:30 we leave. The first stops are in Gaza City. Before starting distribution, Anas leads us to find a girl, very young, because she has a surprise for us. We get out of the car. We enter into a house and we go out into the garden. Shoes sink into the sand. We raise our eyes. A unique sight struck by sunlight. An immense sand sculpture. A boat, with Palestinian people on board, guided and pulled by Vittorio Arrigoni that will lead them to freedom. A strong emotion. We know Rana A. El Ramlawi, she is the sculptress. Young and full of hope, full of passion and ideals. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to admire this immense work of art. The material with which he has chosen to express his ability is significant: the sand ... many grains that form a beautiful sight together ... as all the citizens of the world should do ... united to go on, united to achieve goals ... leaving disputes behind, and set apart protagonism ... Thanks Rana! We get back in the car and we leave. We have prepared kits. Children, depending also on the severity and form of the disease, will receive primarily mepilex gauze, we do not want to do hidden advertising, but simply inform you that this type of protection is essential for these children. In addition to these specific creams, foods such as homogenized and baby food, in some cases a wheelchair, and then some toys. To help everyone understand below we allow ourselves to make a small reference to this rare disease. Epidermolysis bullosa is a rare and highly disabling hereditary genetic disease. It causes blisters and lesions of the skin and internal mucous membranes. This pathology is also known as "The syndrome of butterfly children", this is because the little ones affected by this genetic alteration are as fragile as the wings of the butterflies. Epidermal lesions can appear spontaneously or through even slight friction on the dermis. It has different stages of gravity, not only affects the skin externally, but often also internally, and when it attacks the mouth and throat also the simple, but fundamental, gesture of eating is difficult and very painful. In some cases even the eyes can be affected. Currently there are no remedial treatments. However, it is necessary to ensure total protection of the child's skin and the adoption of an appropriate lifestyles that can avoid trauma and prevent infections through wound care. Another very important phase is the monitoring and adoption of strategies that can prevent the affected tissues from being seriously compromised. Science estimates that one in every 17,000 children are affected by this disease at birth. Family after family, from Gaza City to Nusseirat, from Al Maghazi to Shejaia ... We meet 18 children, and that's not all of them. We reflect that life is asking too much of these little children. They were born in a place that is not safe and, unlike so many other children, for example in Syria or Yemen, have never seen a normal situation with their own eyes. Some from birth know only



bombs and fear, blood and violence. In addition to all this pain must be added that of disease. The physical pain of these wounds that cannot be cleaned, that cannot be disinfected, that cannot undergo specific treatment. Everything is difficult. We also add the mood of a parent. Fathers and mothers who see their children contracting with pain because in some cases they can't even eat. And them, powerless. They cannot turn to other specialised centres around the world. No they cannot because they are to blame for being born in the Gaza Strip. It's all absurd. We spend all our time with them. A word of comfort to men and women, a moment of leisure for the little ones. The sun sets, we are still on the way, having traveled for a long time. Tired and exhausted, especially in our soul. We do not stop. We go back to the warehouse and leave again. We meet the representatives of an association. With them we are laying concrete foundations to increase our work in the area. After today we understand that a fixed base is indispensable here. Only in this way could we think of taking on increasingly targeted interventions. Especially on a health level. We are already alerting our medical friends that they need to be here too. We go back to the room, it's late at night. While we work on photos and diaries we think how important the contribution of all the associations and all the people who have worked for the collection of materials is and especially that of the boys of No Ponti No Muri in Cagliari, Crevari Invade, and the Senator Monica Cirinnà. The latter have earmarked funds for the purchase of special gauze that will ease the pain of these beautiful little sou

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### **Sunday 01 March 2020 – 26th day**

We reload the vehicle that will follow us today. We will deliver the materials to other families of children with Epidermolysis. If someone new is reading this page of the diary, I recommend reading yesterday's page, in which we have explained in a simple and summarized way what this pathology is and what it means for a boy or a girl to live, as far as possible, with this Invincible "beast". We start from the warehouse and reach Shejaia once again. It is never easy to have to say goodbye and get out of houses or tents. The instinct is to hug children tightly and never leave them anymore. We still have a lot of work to do. We leave to reach Khan Younis and then Al Shoka, finally Rafah. In total we visited 20 families. Like yesterday to each of them, depending on the case of severity of the disease, we left the kits prepared previously with the help of Isaac, who knows in a capillary way the situation in which every boy and girl is concerned. Mepilex gauze, creams, homogenized, baby food, cleansing soaps with correct pH to not irritate or attack the dermis, some games. It is from 9:30 that we are around for a strip. At 15:30 we go to our Palestinian family's house. We sit with Anas and eat, not too much because hunger often goes away when you think about what you've just seen. We would like energy from justice rather than food. We are very close to the Egyptian border. Suddenly right in that direction we perceive explosions on explosions, burst shots, F16 passing. In Egypt a military operation must be underway. We salute Rafah with this hideous sound of yet another pain. We arrive in the room that is evening. Tomorrow we will continue.

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### **Monday 02 March 2020 – 27th day**

Today is the last day of distribution to families with children suffering from Epidermolysis Bollosa. The area on which we will focus our work is North of the Strip. We arrive at Beit Hanun. We know six families there. The situation is the same as in the previous days. Once again the stab in the chest is bitter and deep. All, both boys and girls. The disease doesn't hold back, it attacks if it has to attack, even children in swaddling. We end our stay and leave Beit Hanun behind us, one of the most tortured areas of the whole Strip. Here we are 6 km from the Israeli city of Sderot. People who live in Beit Hanun live with more anxiety and fear than others. This soil is always on the frontline ... among the first to see the incursions of tanks and other military vehicles. We continue on our way. From the extreme north east we drive in the direction of the sea. We arrive at Beit Lahia. Many will remember this place in a direct broadcast from many television stations. It was July 14, 2014. A voice roared over loudspeakers "Leave the houses. We're bombing". We want to remember it instead for sycamore trees, or what remains of them. We go to the homes of the last families on the list. We enter on tiptoe, it often seems to violate a dimension of private lives, but the smiles and outstretched hands of these people is what breaks down every obstacle. No bridges and no walls. How beautiful it would be, everyone hand in hand, with eyes blinded by the sun while laughing, singing and joking. The last kit is placed on the floor. This mission today sees the end of distribution. It is infinite joy, but also immense sadness. We wish we could meet and talk to the 2 million people who live in this strip. Listen to every single discomfort, embrace every single pain. We would like to tell all men, women, boys and girls that they are not alone. We are all citizens of the world. We have now arrived home. Tomorrow and for the next three days there will only be important meetings for the planning of the next intervention and then ... Inchallah

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## **Tuesday 03 March 2020 – 28th day**

The distribution, as we wrote yesterday, has ended. In these last remaining days, everything is concentrated on the organization of future work. Our desire is to give structure to a project that is not just emergency relief, even if it's not possible to abandon this aspect here on the Gaza Strip, but to prepare a presence that is aimed at development. In the past few days some steps have already been taken, the next few hours will be fundamental. We will formulate general agreements for subsequent partnerships. At 12:00 we return to the UHCC. We spend many hours there in close discussion. We find an agreement. Music for Peace with 99% probability will soon open a permanent office on the Gaza Strip. By doing so we will be able to manage more widespread and targeted distribution, and also a partial restructuring of the hospital structure, compatible with the aid that we will receive in the next months. In addition to this, the health aspect is extremely important. We will start a project that will facilitate visits to the Gaza Strip by doctors from our country for education and training, and allow them to operate in a concrete way in the field. We therefore hope to have the availability and adhesion of many professionals willing to donate time, skills and experience. We find ourselves sitting on our chairs, elbows resting on the desk, all together dreaming about the future ... but when many dream together ... a new reality begins ... we say goodbye to our friends at the UHCC. We move on and arrive at Rafah. We visit the home of an old friend of ours who has helped the onsite work of Music for Peace many times before. We chat with Abu Ali and learn that he has big problems in both knees and because of this he is almost unable to walk. When we say goodbye it is with hope in our hearts that we will

be able to help him in this difficult situation so that his physical discomfort can soon be resolved.  
We move on to greet everyone at the home of our Palestinian family, part of the Anas family.  
Warm hugs, handshakes and infinite looking into each other's eyes. More goodbyes. We get back  
into the car and head back to our room ... continuing to dream about what could be achieved.

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