

Elizabeth Kassis Sabag

"I am proud to be able to make a contribution to Palestine!"

Written by Valentina Giacaman Hazboun



Twenty years ago, Elizabeth Kassis visited Palestine and was deeply touched, "To be here, to smell and feel literally means to understand that this is my origin," she said and promised to come back. The Chilean descendant of Palestinians who originally came from Bethlehem, an entrepreneur in the Latin American world of horse breeding, has kept her promise and is about to initiate a project that aims to offer hippotherapy in Palestine. Hippotherapy is a form of rehabilitation used in trauma therapy, a comprehensive method that utilizes interaction with horses. "There are many areas of need in Palestine, especially in healthcare, but I don't

want to contribute out of grief, but out of optimism and happiness," says Kassis.

Kassis, based in Santiago, is a passionate horse fan and at present runs her family's haras (farms), the Saint Ana Haras, that breed Arabian, Chilean and Friesian horses. "Raising these animals is a process that is similar to painting a picture," she says. "Only when the foals are born, you fully see

character, and future specialists must be taught both, how to treat and tame the horses and how to administer therapy for children, and possibly adults, who have been traumatized. Once this has been accomplished, classes will be ready to begin.

"This project can become the project of my life in Palestine", says Kassis.



the final product." Her passion led her to co-produce Artax, a family movie about the relationship between a child with Asperger's syndrome and its animal friends. The movie is made in Chile and Disney has expressed its interest to distribute it across Latin America. Having hosted the TV show "Caballos" (horses) on the La Red TV channel for one year, Kassis is now recording "Caballos, Vinos y Destilados" (Horses, Wines, and Spirits) for Discovery Latinoamérica, in which horses serve as the vehicle by which culinary customs, spirits, wines, and local culture of different countries are presented.

Kassis was pleasantly surprised by the call of Bank of Palestine (BOP) to jointly develop a project in Palestine, and she feels honored to be able to make it happen. This project includes the introduction of the specialization as a university degree, as it is intended to be comprehensive and sustainable for the long term. Initial steps require the search for the appropriate horses, taking into account their pedigree and

It has been introduced to Palestinian institutions and even at the World Health Organization. In September 2016, Elizabeth visited Palestine together with a group of other Chileans descendants of Palestinians. Thanks to BOP, Elizabeth was able to present the idea to universities and different institutions in Palestine and to visit horse centers in Jericho and Turmus Ayya. Kassis is confident that the idea will materialize. She explains, "This visit will allow us to do the comprehensive research that is necessary in order to enable us to formally start the project. For us, as young people, our job is to invite people to join in new enterprises. Palestine is a fertile ground where any seed can grow."

Distance is not a problem for Kassis. "Previously, people used to establish themselves in a country and never go out. Today, most projects can be managed online." Elizabeth plans to come back next year, this time with her twin sons, to spend a month working on the project.