

## **Caritas Internationalis calls for intensified diplomatic action amid fears of further conflict in the Middle East.**

Caritas Australia has today echoed a statement from Caritas Internationalis, which expresses deep concern about the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe, and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law, unfolding in the Holy Land.

In a statement Caritas Internationalis has reflected on the desperate severity of humanitarian need in Gaza and the devastating impact of the conflict on civilians, especially children. The statement drew attention to growing fears of wider conflict in the Middle East, noting the forced displacement of tens of thousands of people in southern Lebanon as an example of this coming to bear.

The situation in the West Bank was also called out, with Caritas Internationalis stating that it is “deteriorating rapidly with increasing threats to civilian lives, restrictions of free movement, arbitrary detentions and widespread degrading treatment of Palestinian populations, as documented by the United Nations.”

**Karam Abi Yazbeck, Regional Coordinator for Caritas Middle East and North Africa said,** “Our partners on the ground in Gaza have just days of water, food and fuel remaining. If humanitarian workers are on their final supplies, then it is hard to imagine the situation for those most vulnerable in Gaza. What we need to see now is immediate political decisions that align with humanitarian needs.

“We remain deeply concerned too about the threat of wider regional conflict, which would lead to further displacement and loss of life in the Middle East. Humanitarian priorities must see us calling for an immediate cessation of violence, and an end to international division,” he concluded.

Caritas Internationalis continues to appeal to all parties in the conflict, and to the international community, to intensify diplomatic action to:

- Urgently implement an immediate ceasefire;
- Urgently grant unimpeded safe humanitarian access to and across all of Gaza, and allow large scale aid operations, including through the reopening of the Karem Abu Salem crossing;
- Protect civilians, distinguish between civilians and combatants in adherence to the principle of distinction;
- Preserve civilian infrastructure and immediately restore services essential to the survival of the civilian population, including but not limited to water, food, health, fuel, and power systems;
- Respect the protection and security of humanitarian personnel, their assets, and relief items;
- Rapidly facilitate the evacuation of patients requiring medical treatment or protection from Gaza, while also ensuring their right to return to their homes as soon as they wish to do so;
- Work towards a durable two-State solution, echoing Pope Francis’ call.

To support Caritas Australia’s Gaza Appeal, visit [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza) or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

**ENDS**

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