

CRS President Sean Callahan told “I survive from your food” during a visit to the Holy Land.

Sean Callahan, President of CRS, a Caritas Australia partner in the Holy Land, recently visited Gaza, Jerusalem, and the West Bank.

CRS has 45 team members living and working inside Gaza, and almost all of them have been displaced once or multiple times during the conflict. They are now living in other people’s homes, crowded shelters, or in tents or under tarps.

One told him “We cried for the first two weeks and then we went back to work. Doing things offers a sense of purpose.”

Sean observed the output of this tireless work, touring a new warehouse in Gaza that used to be a supermarket. This warehouse has enabled CRS to distribute food, tarps and tents, bedding, hygiene supplies, and cash assistance to more than 100,000 people. To support governance a rigorous registration process for those receiving assistance has also been established.

“The Gaza team have built relationships that allow us to go places where others find it difficult” reflected Sean. “People are saying that assistance can’t take place in Gaza, that it’s too chaotic, but the provision of lifesaving aid is taking place thanks to dedicated, brave Gazans.”

Sean Callahan also visited shelters and met people surviving on the supplies offered by the Caritas network and made possible by the generosity and compassion of donors. One man, previously a day labourer, is unable to stand due to a wound to his thigh from shelling. When asked how he survives he told Sean, “From your food.”

While visiting these temporary shelters Sean observed local markets having been set up, such as makeshift stores and barbershops, prompting him to reflect on resilience and togetherness.

“The resilience of the people of Gaza inspired me deeply and makes me think about how we can set an example for bringing people together - people of different faiths, countries, and languages. In doing so we must look within our own countries to observe whether we are doing what is admirable.”

“I left Gaza feeling that our Gazan team are truly heroes. Each one has a unique and tragic story and despite the stress, pressure, anxiety, and loss, they are out there helping others who are in need” Sean concluded.

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

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