

## **Caritas Australia calls for compassion, justice, and lasting peace in Gaza**

On the second anniversary of the escalation of conflict between Israel and Gaza, Caritas Australia joins the global community in mourning the lives lost and calling for a peace built on justice, dignity, and care for all.

On October 7, 2023, nearly 1,200 Israelis were killed, with a further 250 taken hostage. Over half of the hostages have been released alive with the bodies of over 50 repatriated to Israel, while close to 50 remain as hostages both alive and dead.

“Today we must remember the Israeli lives lost two years ago and as hostages since. We must pray for those who have been returned to Israel bearing the mental and psychical scars of captivity, and for those yet to come home” said **Kirsten Sayers CEO of Caritas Australia**.

In the two years since, over 65,000 Palestinians have been killed in a brutal conflict that has marked every person living in Gaza. It has become the deadliest place on earth to be a child, a healthcare worker, or a humanitarian. It is a place of famine, mass displacement, and unimaginable suffering.

Thousands of children have been orphaned, and countless others live with life-altering injuries. Medical services are overwhelmed, with doctors working without anaesthesia, pain relief, or antibiotics. Disease is rampant. Most people have been displaced multiple times, and many have lived in tents for two years, enduring starvation, trauma, and loss.

On this sobering anniversary, Caritas Australia also shares the words of a Caritas Jerusalem colleague who is one of 125 staff members who continue to serve others while enduring the worst of this war themselves:

“We lost everything. But we thank God we are alive and together. Life has been difficult with hunger and starvation. With bombs and destruction. The daily challenge of movement. The rising prices. I have also lost friends. Everything is very hard here. But despite the tragedies we hold onto hope and pray for peace.”

Despite immense challenges, Caritas Jerusalem has supported tens of thousands of people with medical services and psychosocial care and continues to assist hundreds sheltering in churches. CRS has delivered several vital services including water trucking and food partnerships with the World Food Program, reaching over 1.7 million people since October 2023, including support for 400 people sheltering in churches.

**Kirsten Sayers** looked ahead with caution, saying; “As we mark this painful anniversary, we should also look to the green shoots of peace, which are fragile and must be nurtured with discernment and care by the international community.”

“The road ahead is long, and will be marked by further division, but the very least we can pray for today is the delivery of a large scale, unhindered humanitarian response that meets the needs of over two million people dealing with severe and largely untreated physical and psychological injuries.”

“In the longer term we must remember that lasting peace must be underpinned by justice. Catholic values of human dignity and subsidiarity have never been more pertinent, as they remind us that peace must include everyone, especially those most affected by the decisions being made. We are called to be peacemakers, to love our neighbour, and to be good Samaritans.”

Caritas Australia calls on Australians to stand in solidarity with all innocent people who continue to suffer, through prayer, donations, and advocacy.

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

1800 024 413 toll free.

To access prayers and advocacy resources such as letter writing kits visit  
<https://www.caritas.org.au/act/gaza>

**ENDS**

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