

Middle East Crisis: Caritas Australia shares updates from the ground.

Caritas Australia is receiving increasingly grave reports from partners across the Middle East as conflict intensifies in multiple countries, placing millions of civilians at risk.

Tragically, partners have also reported that Fr. Pierre Rahi, Priest of Caritas Lebanon's Marjaayoun Centre, was killed by Israeli airstrike on March 9, 2026.

In the wake of ongoing loss and violence in the region, **Caritas MONA (Middle East and North Africa)** has expressed deep concern over the devastating humanitarian consequences for civilians, noting that communities already living in fragile conditions are now experiencing further fear, displacement, and instability.

The Assembly of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops in Lebanon have also issued a statement warning about the "dangerous escalation of armed conflicts," highlighting the fall of innocent victims, mass displacement of families, and a deepening humanitarian crisis. They stress that the continued "spiral of violence threatens the dignity of the human person" and call for an immediate end to hostilities, a return to constructive dialogue, and urgent international action to prevent further deterioration.

Caritas Australia has also received detailed updates from Caritas Lebanon, which has been responding since hostilities intensified on 2 March. Over recent days, large-scale military operations and repeated displacement orders have triggered mass movement of civilians across the country.

As of 9 March, Caritas Lebanon reports:

- 667,831 newly displaced people have registered for support
- 119,700 people are sheltering across 567 collective centres nationwide
- More than 1,300 people injured and at least 486 people have been killed, including children

Ongoing strikes continue to force families to flee repeatedly, often arriving at shelters with few or no belongings. Many shelters, particularly in Mount Lebanon, North Lebanon and Akkar, are now at or near full capacity.

Despite the volatile environment, Caritas Lebanon teams are operating across seven governorates, delivering food, essential items, healthcare, psychosocial support, water and hygiene assistance, and protection services. Over 54,000 people have already been assisted through emergency activities coordinated with government ministries, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners.

Tensions continue to deepen across the wider region, with Caritas Jerusalem staff reporting continuous missile and rocket fire, and families regularly sheltering during air raid sirens.

Speaking from Bethlehem, **Anton Asfar, Secretary General of Caritas Jerusalem**, said: "I am witnessing closed shops, most of the businesses are closed. There is almost no movement in the streets, so the socio-economic situation is really devastating. We call upon our partners, sisters, and brothers to continue to support us since we do not have many resources to provide lifesaving services in the Holy Land."

Caritas Jerusalem continues to operate its medical centres in Taybeh in the West Bank, as well as Gaza, with humanitarian programs in Gaza ongoing under strict security

protocols.

Caritas Australia continues to closely monitor the rapidly deteriorating situation and stands in solidarity with its partners who remain on the frontlines, delivering assistance amid escalating violence and uncertainty.

To support Caritas Australia's Emergency Appeals, visit www.caritas.org.au/emergency or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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