

Local Caritas health workers reach more than 78,000 people as Gaza's humanitarian crisis deepens.

As Gaza's humanitarian crisis continues to worsen, Caritas Jerusalem's local staff are providing critical healthcare, mental health support and humanitarian assistance to people facing displacement, disease, injury and severe shortages of basic services.

Displacement sites continue to report severe infestations of rodents and pests, while the breakdown of most sewage pumping stations means around 40,000 cubic meters of sewage is entering residential areas, the sea and groundwater sources each day. As a result, the spread of infectious diseases such as acute diarrhoea and hepatitis A has increased.

Almost three years of war in Gaza has caused catastrophic humanitarian, health, environmental, and social consequences, disproportionately affecting people with disabilities, women, and children. Pregnant women in particular face dangerous conditions, including malnutrition, overcrowding, infection risks, and limited access to safe childbirth and postnatal care.

Caritas Jerusalem has been responding to these needs since October 2023, and since January this year, has delivered 78,711 medical consultations in Gaza.

Caritas Jerusalem has described its healthcare response as healing the wounds of Gaza, both visible and invisible, noting that "not every wound can be treated with medicine. Children who have witnessed violence, mothers carrying the weight of their families, and people living with constant uncertainty also need someone to listen and help them cope."

For Caritas Jerusalem staff, "healthcare is therefore about more than treating an illness. It is about restoring dignity, reassurance and a sense of normality to people whose lives have been profoundly disrupted."

Caritas Jerusalem's 120 local staff continue serving their communities while facing many of the same challenges as those they support, including displacement, damaged homes, limited access to clean water and unreliable electricity.

Sally Thomas, Humanitarian Manager at Caritas Australia, said: "The staff providing these services are living through this crisis themselves, yet they continue to show up every day to care for their communities. Many have lost homes, are living in overcrowded conditions with little privacy, and are working in a high-stress and under-resourced healthcare environment. Caritas is doing everything it can to support them, including regular check-ins and sourcing hygiene supplies where possible, but the pressure on local staff remains immense."

While healthcare remains a cornerstone of the response, Caritas Jerusalem's work extends far beyond medical consultations and includes mental health services, clean water supplies, food packages, prosthetic limbs and assistive devices for people living with conflict-related injuries and disabilities.

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

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