

Dear Bishop Patrick,

I hope you are keeping well. I realise that the CAFOD Harvest appeal was only very recent, but I'm writing to you today because the situation in the Holy Land and our response to the current Israeli-Palestinian crisis is too important not to share with you. You will have seen the coverage of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza where people are losing their homes and loved ones, food and water are running out, and people can't escape the violence, even if they are sheltering in church buildings.

We immediately condemned the shocking killing of Israeli civilians and the taking of hostages and are horrified by the continuing killing of Palestinian people. We have invited Catholics to write to the UK Foreign Secretary to ask that he works for a ceasefire and unfettered humanitarian access, the upholding of international law on both sides, and progress towards a lasting peace. We appreciate the statements which the Bishops Conference have made in a similar vein. Your witness has been an important contribution.

As you'll have seen, the onset of the violence came with many complexities for international aid networks including Caritas International, of which we're a part. But we are now [working with local partners](#) in Gaza and Israel to support families with cash vouchers, essential supplies and counselling. To resource this work, and scale it up if we can, we've launched an appeal to Catholics in England and Wales.

What have we done so far? We have been able to send funds immediately through our core funding, but we know more is needed.

- We've sent £100,000 to our local partner, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) who are already supporting 10,000 families with cash vouchers. Families are using these to purchase essentials like food and water as well as mattresses and bedding from wholesale suppliers in Gaza.
- We have committed £50,000 to our local partner, Culture and Free Thought Association, who are sheltering 300 people in their centres in Gaza and are supporting them with cash assistance, food, water and offering counselling to those dealing with losing their loved ones, their homes and their livelihoods.
- We are also sending £10,000 to our local partner Sadaka Reut, working in southern Israel with local emergency support groups providing psychological support, basic humanitarian assistance and building emotional resilience.

Our Caritas partner, Caritas Jerusalem, have about 100 staff in Gaza. They've told us: *"Most of our employees have been forced to leave their homes. Some have sought refuge in the Holy Family Compound in Gaza, others in UNRWA schools, and some in the homes of relatives and friends. Several of our employees' houses have been completely demolished. They're in shock, confused, and perplexed. They don't have electricity, and the internet is sporadic."*


Just this morning, we have been told that our partner agencies in Gaza have had more staff killed in the conflict. Your support and prayers of solidarity for those putting their lives at risk to help during this crisis are needed now more than ever.

I am sure you were moved by the recent letter from Jerusalem Patriarch Cardinal Pizzaballa to his diocese. He shared this reflection and prayer which I will share with you as I close:

*"I cannot live this extremely painful time without looking upward, without looking to Christ, without the faith that enlightens my view and yours on what we are experiencing, without turning our thoughts to God. We need a Word to accompany us, to comfort and encourage us. We need it like the air we breathe.*

*...Finally, let us pray for all innocent victims. The suffering of the innocent before God has a precious and redemptive value because it is united with the redemptive suffering of Christ. May their suffering bring peace ever closer!"*

We continue to pray with one another for an end to the violence. In the meantime, we do what we can to support people and communities there. Thank you as always for your prayers and support to our work and that of our partners worldwide.



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