



PONTIFICAL MISSION

the papal agency for Middle East relief and development

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Gaza Situation Update

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How will Gaza cope now?

Millions of people on both sides of the Gaza border are breathing a little easier this morning as the latest 72-hour humanitarian ceasefire has been extended for an additional 5 days. Intense negotiations will continue in the coming days to reach a permanent ceasefire which may lead to the lifting of the blockade and the beginning to rebuild Gaza. In turn, it will hopefully lead to a resumption of serious peace negotiations to resolve the core issues of this never-ending cycle of violence and an end to the occupation. Let us all keep praying that despite the loss of innocent lives and destruction that some good will eventually come out of this.

Our local partners in Gaza have said that it was only during the last few days that people have begun to leave their homes and examine the colossal damage caused to this tiny strip. Their worry during the war was their personal safety and whether their homes and institutions will be shelled. Then, it was the concern about basic necessities such as electricity, food, clean drinking water and medicines, and once the ceasefire was in effect, people wondered how and when Gaza will be able to pick up the pieces and get back to a “semi-normal” situation.

How will Gaza cope now? - With the over 10,000 injured, many of whom will end up with permanent disabilities; who will rebuild the 16,600 housing units that were destroyed or severely damaged?; who will repair the 33,500 houses that sustained damages?; where will over 100,000 people who became homeless live?; what kind of social problems will develop as over 373,000 children have been traumatized and are in need of psychosocial intervention, in addition to the adults who have been traumatized?; how can the school year start after 230 schools (140 governmental and 90 UNRWA) were damaged including 25 schools completely destroyed ? (most of the remaining schools continue to be used as shelters housing more than 386,000 internally displaced people); when will they have electricity and no longer worry about noisy generators?; when will they be able to operate their refrigerator again and have access to potable drinking water? All of these questions have surfaced given the gravity of Gaza’s destruction and the people who are devastated by the destruction, to say the least.



A woman stands in what was once her home in Beit Hanoun, Gaza. Photo courtesy of The Guardian.

The sad stories of human suffering continue to unfold. One story that really touched my heart was that of Niveen Al-Attar, a 30-year old nurse who worked at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital for six years and has dedicated herself to saving lives. After enduring a very long shift, she was urged by her colleagues to go home and rest for two days. Shortly after her arrival to her family home, the building where she lived was shelled; all of her immediate family members including herself, her husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law were killed. The only two people who miraculously survived in the attack were her two young children, now orphaned, and not knowing what the future has in store for them. The sad part of this story is that these children are not alone; many more orphaned children are facing an uncertain future.

Since the beginning of the war, we have concentrated our efforts on aiding medical facilities, specifically Al-Ahli Arab Hospital and NECC Mother and Child clinics. Al-Ahli Arab Hospital continued its full operation during the war and was overwhelmed, receiving around 300 patients per day and working under an intense situation. The NECC clinics which were located in neighborhoods that were heavily shelled and closed during the war are now back in operation as the ceasefire takes hold. Both institutions are reporting a sharp increase in the number of patients with skin diseases, diarrhea and respiratory tract infections as internally displaced people who continue to seek shelter in schools (which some schools were only built to accommodate 500 people is actually hosting over 3,000 people) are suffering from overcrowded conditions, lack access to water, poor nutrition intake and poor hygiene.

PMP's emergency program has already provided Al-Ahli Arab Hospital with much needed medicines, medical supplies and fuel for the hospital's generators; Al-Ahli has reported that since the beginning of the war, over 10,000 emergency cases have been treated at the hospital. Plans are underway to provide funds for the now-operating NECC mother and child clinics for medicine and fuel. It is expected that the clinics will receive double to triple the number of patients received on a regular basis. Additionally, various assessments are now underway that will determine the extent of the damages sustained at Christian institutions and Christian homes. As part of its emergency program and with the availability of funds, PMP will help repair damages sustained to these institutions and homes. Finally, PMP is in consultation with its main partners to design a psychosocial intervention for traumatized children at local schools, kindergartens, clinics, hospitals and youth institutions.



Child participating in a psychosocial program at his kindergarten under NECC Clinic psychosocial program implemented by PMP in 2012.

It is worth mentioning that the coordination between Catholic aid organizations and members of the ACT Alliance has never been better. All parties have repeatedly met to coordinate and share response strategies which complement our work and ensure maximum impact. Although we fully realize what we can contribute is just a little drop in the vast sea of needs in Gaza, our effort reflects our true solidarity and support to the people of Gaza. In fact,

there has been an unprecedented spirit of cooperation and coordination that we all feel very proud of. Catholic aid organizations such as Caritas is busy delivering food packages, clothes and toys and will be implementing a cash assistance program at a later stage while Catholic Relief Services is providing non-food packages and aiding medical facilities in various areas of Gaza, just to highlight some of the other emergency programs that are underway.

The ever increasing needs on the ground and the unprecedented generosity of so many of our donors, we felt the obligation to revise the budget for various components of the appeal. Below, please find a comparative table from the time the appeal was launched on 23 July 2014 and now, which highlights the growing needs of Gaza.

	Count when PMP Appeal was launched on 23/7/2014	Count on 13 August 2014
Killed	650	1,960 (including 1,375 civilians of whom 458 children and 237 women)
Injured	4,000	9,986
Israelis Killed	28 soldiers	67 (including 64 soldiers)
Housing Units destroyed	1,090	8,800
Housing units severely damaged (uninhabitable)	994	7,900
Housing units sustained damages	18,000	33,500
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	117,000	386,000
No. affected by lack of infrastructure (electricity, water, and waste water)	1.2 Million	1.7 Million
Health Institutions Targeted	5 Hospitals; 6 Public Health Clinics	17 Hospitals; 70 Public Health Clinics
Schools Targeted	117	230 sustained damages including 25 destroyed
Children in need of Psychosocial Support	116,000	373,000
Ambulances Targeted	4	22

*Source of Verification: UN-OCHA Situation Updates.

I will be amiss if I do not thank our generous donors for their unprecedented and generous support, including some support that we did not even solicit. I am very happy to report that we have exceeded our original target in most categories and in some instances, doubled or tripled it. In particular, I wish to thank the *Custos of the Holy Land*, Fr. Pizzabala for making a generous contribution to the Christian community in Gaza, while insisting that the majority Greek Orthodox are taken care of. What has been heartening to me was that both the Latin Parish and the Greek Orthodox Myrrh Bearers Society insisted all Christians are supported as they are all one in Christ. The Ecumenical spirit that was not only alive during the latest papal visit to the Holy Land, is now in action even under extreme conditions of war. Indeed there is hope through faith, even when the whole world seems to be crumbling around you.

The Pontifical Mission is pleased for the generous response from many corners of the world that makes our work possible. We will continue to monitor the situation closely and report

to you regularly. God bless you all for making the lives of many thousands more gentle and livable!

Sami El-Yousef
Regional Director, Pontifical Mission for Palestine