

## *Holy Land*

# **“We need aid more than ever”**

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**At the request of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the international Catholic pastoral charity “Aid to the Church in Need” (ACN) will give support to victims of the Gaza war. According to the Patriarchate, the most urgent tasks include emergency medical aid for war victims who are currently receiving treatment in hospitals both within Gaza and outside.**



In the Catholic St. Joseph's Hospital in Jerusalem, alongside 24 Muslims, there is now also a seriously injured Christian from Gaza who is unable to pay for the costs of his treatment. The Christian medical facilities in Gaza itself are also in need of support. Currently they are severely affected by the shortage of power and fuel in the territory, and are thus restricted in their ability to fulfil their tasks.

Funding is therefore required for fuel for power generators. As well as emergency medical aid for the injured, the repair of Christian facilities in Gaza will also be necessary. For example the Catholic school of the Holy Family, which is currently sheltering 1,000 refugees, must be renovated before it can be put back into operation. Private houses belonging to Christians have also been completely destroyed in some cases. The Latin Patriarchate has also requested ACN's help for their repair.

### **The highest number of Palestinian victims since 1967**



Representatives of the Patriarchate have therefore addressed themselves to ACN's supporters. Fouad Twal, the Latin Patriarch, said recently in Jerusalem: "Dear benefactors of ACN. We in the Holy Land are a Church in need. Please continue to give us your prayers, your solidarity and your aid. We need them now more than ever." William Shomali, the Bishop responsible for Gaza in the Patriarchate, also appealed to ACN: "The humanitarian situation in Gaza is very bad. We ask for your prayers for a ceasefire and peace. We ask for your help for the poor and those injured by the war. Now, more than ever before, is the time to aid the people in Gaza."

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, over 1,700 Palestinians have so far lost their lives in the Gaza war since 8 July, more than 9,000 have been injured, in some cases severely, and over 254,000 people are in flight within the Gaza Strip as a result. This represents the highest number of Palestinian victims in the conflict with Israel since the Six-Day War of 1967, during which Israel conquered the Palestinian territories which it has occupied ever since.



The war has also dealt a heavy blow to Gaza's Christian community. Some 1,300 Christians live in the territory alongside its approximately 1.8 million Muslim inhabitants. The Greek Orthodox Church has a congregation of about 1,200, while some 170 belong to the Roman Catholic Church. Both Churches have accepted Muslim refugees into their buildings.

One Orthodox Christian woman has already lost her life in the Israeli bombardment. Many others have been injured, in some cases severely. As well as the Orthodox cemetery and private houses belonging to Christians, the buildings of the Catholic Parish of the Holy Family have also been damaged. The Argentinean priest, Jorge Hernandez, still remains there together with three Sisters from the Order of Mother Teresa as well as handicapped children and elderly people for whom the Sisters are caring.

Aid requested from Aid to the Church in Need to help in Gaza totals \$73,500 to date.