

## **Caritas Australia draws attention to the humanitarian impact of evacuation orders in Southern Gaza.**

On December 3rd, an area covering about 20 per cent of Khan Younis city was ordered by leaflet drop to evacuate. The potential population of this area is around [167,000](#), with those people asked to move to three other overcrowded towns. This was the first of a series of planned evacuations that may last for weeks.

Pre-October 7th the Gaza Strip was already one of the most densely populated areas in the world, with 2.2 million people living in about 365 square kilometres and 8 in 10 of those people already reliant on international aid. An estimated [1.8 million](#) people are now internally displaced, with humanitarian aid having been limited to around 3 per cent of pre-conflict levels and bombardment having disrupted critical infrastructure.

As evacuation orders roll out in the South, the humanitarian situation will become even more desperate says Sally Thomas, Humanitarian Emergencies Lead at Caritas Australia, “People are being asked to leave their homes in exchange for a temporary shelter where the demand on scarce amenities will be higher as displaced people flood in, and where reports of disease are also on the rise.”

She also drew attention to the concerning reality for vulnerable people, “evacuation needs to be done via foot or donkey, and for the disabled, the sick, and the elderly that is simply not feasible. Meanwhile women and children across the world find themselves at greater risk of violence and sexual abuse in refugee camps, as well as finding it harder than other refugees to access food, water, and shelter.”

There are reports of people choosing to stay in these areas rather than evacuate, which Sally Thomas said speaks volumes about the risks posed by evacuation, stating that “once people leave their homes, they become part of a population of displaced persons. This is a marginalised identity that brings with it a host of challenges, traumas, and vulnerabilities. It is not a decision anybody could make lightly.

“As we look ahead the simple unavoidable truth is that further displacement will lead to less food, less water, less medicine, less available beds and shelters, more disease, more suffering, and more death. As discourse about the nature of conflict in the South continues, evacuation should not be seen as humanitarian when the reality is such a departure from human rights and dignity”, Sally Thomas concluded.

To support Caritas Australia’s Gaza Appeal, visit [www.caritas.org.au/gaza](http://www.caritas.org.au/gaza) or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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