

Caritas Australia condemns historic humanitarian death toll.

In 2023, 280 aid workers were killed globally, which is twice as many as any other year in the past decade. So far this year, 170 humanitarians have been killed.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict in Gaza, a [report](#) revealed South Sudan to be the most dangerous place for aid workers, with 40 attacks leaving 22 dead. Since October 7th, the UN has [reported](#) the deaths of at least 250 aid workers in only ten months, in just one small enclave of 360 square kilometres. Meanwhile, humanitarian workers and their activities are supposed to be protected by International Humanitarian Law.

Damian Spruce, **Advocacy Associate Director at Caritas Australia** of the historic death toll: “At its most basic level, International Humanitarian Law demands rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access, freedom of movement for humanitarian workers, and the protection of civilians including medical and aid workers. It also demands the protection of refugees, prisoners, the wounded and sick.”

“From day one of any conflict – whether it be in Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza or anywhere else in the world - civilians, humanitarians, and medical workers, should be protected. This is something we agreed upon as a global, human family, as we enshrined it in International Law.”

Alongside this death toll the burden on humanitarian workers has continued to grow. Nearly [300 million](#) people are expected to need humanitarian assistance this year. The convergence of increased conflict, the global climate emergency, and economic pressures are cited as being behind this sharp increase in demand on humanitarian response.

People are twice as likely to be forcibly displaced now than they were ten years ago, with outbreaks of cholera increasing as people enter crowded refugee camps and lose access to clean water and sanitation. One in five children are now living in or fleeing from conflict and 258 million people face food insecurity.

“Australia has a diplomatic and financial role to play in helping address the dire challenges facing the world,” said Damian Spruce. “Currently, our international aid budget is just 0.8% of our overall budget. Caritas Australia is supporting the Safer World for All campaign, which is backed by a coalition of 25 humanitarian aid agencies, who are pushing for Australia to lift its aid budget in line with current global crises.” he concluded.

Caritas Australia supports vulnerable communities who have been impacted by disasters and emergencies around the world, providing emergency shelter, food, clean water, medical care, and psychosocial support to people facing dire circumstances.

To support Caritas Australia’s Emergency Relief Appeal, visit www.caritas.org.au/emergency or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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