

Caritas Jerusalem's artificial limbs work continues after damaging airstrike

On Sunday, 7 September, the Polio and Artificial Limbs Center in Gaza sustained severe damage after an adjacent residential building was bombarded.

Caritas Jerusalem runs a vital program from the centre that aims to provide artificial limbs to 140 individuals, most of whom are children, who have tragically lost their limbs to the ongoing conflict.

The center was fully operational at the time of the strike, with approximately 100 people inside. Miraculously, all staff and patients managed to evacuate safely. The attack caused extensive infrastructure damage, scattering essential equipment, blowing out windows, and tearing off solar panels. Service rooms were left unusable, and vital tools for prosthetic and mobility support were damaged.

Despite the devastation, staff and community members mobilised immediately. Urgent repairs began the following day, and within 72 hours, the center had reopened its doors resuming its vital humanitarian services for amputees and patients with paralysis who rely on prosthetics and assistive devices to walk, move, and live with dignity.

In response Caritas Australia has joined Caritas Jerusalem in condemning all assaults on medical and humanitarian facilities, which constitute violations of international humanitarian law. The organisations stand in solidarity with the staff of the center and the vulnerable communities it serves and urgently calls on the international community to ensure the protection of such institutions and aid workers.

Sally Thomas Humanitarian Manager at Caritas Australia said, "This attack comes amid growing concern for amputees in Gaza, where access to rehabilitation and prosthetic care is increasingly limited.

"The program being run by Caritas Jerusalem is focussed almost entirely on children, who are dealing with the complexities of managing learning to walk with a prosthesis while their bodies continue to grow. Many of them have lost parents or other family members who might support them, ensuring access to the clinic is vital in helping them retain mobility in an active warzone where the requirement to move at short notice might just save their lives."

To support Caritas Australia's Gaza Crisis Appeal, visit www.caritas.org.au/gaza or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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