

Australian Catholics unite for Gaza on the International Day of Peace

In the lead-up to the International Day of Peace on Sunday 21 September, Caritas Australia has convened a coalition of Catholic organisations across the country to issue a united call for an immediate ceasefire and urgent humanitarian access in Gaza.

The joint statement, titled *Australian Catholics for Peace in Gaza*, urges the Australian Government and the international community to act decisively to protect the lives and dignity of civilians caught in the escalating crisis.

“At least 60,000 people, including over 17,000 children, have been killed in Gaza. The situation is only getting worse,” the statement reads. “We are deeply concerned about the escalating starvation crisis, especially among children. The lack of food, baby formula, clean water, and essential medical supplies is already costing lives.”

Bishop Tim Harris, Chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service, reflected on the statement saying, “The suffering in Gaza calls us to respond not with silence, but with steadfast compassion and moral clarity. Peace is not merely the absence of violence, it is the presence of justice, mercy, and respect for human dignity. Where peace is absent, the Church must stand united in prayer and action, urging all leaders to protect life, for in every person we see the face of Christ.”

The collective call from Catholic organisations in Australia is reflective of the Church’s enduring commitment to peace and justice. It echoes the position of Pope Leo XIV who has consistently advocated for the protection of human dignity and the pursuit of peace through nonviolence and diplomacy.

In turn the statement calls for respect for humanitarian law, a ceasefire, the return of hostages, unimpeded humanitarian access, the abandonment of plans to intensify offensive actions in Gaza, and the suspension of the trade in weapons, including components.

Kirsten Sayers, CEO at Caritas Australia concluded that, “Peace is not a passive ideal, it is an active, sacred duty anchored in our shared faith. As Christians, we are called to be peacemakers, to uphold the dignity of every human life, and to speak out when that dignity is under threat.

“On this day of peace, we join with our Catholic partners across Australia to call for an end to the violence in Gaza and for urgent humanitarian access. This is a moment for moral courage, for compassion, and for unity in the face of immense suffering”.

Signatories gathered by Caritas Australia include:

1. Caritas Australia
2. Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service
3. Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
4. Catholic Religious Australia
5. Pax Christi Australia
6. The Society of Jesus in Australia (Jesuits)
7. Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart
8. Loreto Sisters, Australia and South East Asia
9. Brigidine Sisters
10. Justice and Peace Office, Archdiocese of Sydney

11. MET – Peace, Justice & Ecology, Diocese of Parramatta
12. Jesuit Social Services
13. The Global Centre for Social Justice and Advocacy Leadership
14. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Australia
15. Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre
16. The Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations

Catholic organisations can sign onto the statement by emailing act@caritas.org.au

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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Full statement:

Statement by Australian Catholics for Peace in Gaza

We, the undersigned, call on the Australian Government and the international community to act urgently to protect the lives and dignity of all people in Gaza.

At least 60,000 people, including over 17,000 children, have been killed in Gaza. and the situation is only getting worse.

We are deeply concerned about the escalating starvation crisis, especially among children. The lack of food, baby formula, clean water, and essential medical supplies is already costing lives.

If aid volumes fall further, this could signal a catastrophic turning point for the protection of civilians in Gaza.

To allow further starvation to take hold would forever cast a dark cloud over our collective humanity.

We stand in solidarity with the people of Gaza and with humanitarian organisations working tirelessly to deliver aid under impossible conditions.

We call for:

- The international community to exert political and diplomatic pressure to ensure full respect for international humanitarian law
- A lasting ceasefire and return of all hostages, those still alive and those who are dead
- Adherence to international humanitarian and human rights laws, particularly the provision of unimpeded humanitarian access through impartial aid distribution mechanisms
- The abandonment of plans to intensify offensive actions in Gaza, which would result in further harm to civilians
- The suspension of the trade in weapons, including components

The Catholic agency for international aid and development

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