

Caritas Australia welcomes ruling on urgent humanitarian access to Gaza

Caritas Australia welcomes the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling that humanitarian organisations must have urgent unimpeded access to Gaza, describing the decision as a critical step toward saving lives and restoring dignity to communities devastated by conflict.

The ICJ's directive reinforces what Caritas, its partners, and most global aid groups have long advocated for: that humanitarian access is not a privilege, but a life-saving necessity. The situation in Gaza remains catastrophic, with famine conditions, widespread displacement, and infrastructure in ruins. The entire population is now dependent on humanitarian assistance for food, water, shelter, and medical care.

Caritas Australia's partners on the ground - Caritas Jerusalem and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) - have reported that while the ceasefire has allowed some aid to flow, access remains severely constrained. Both organisations are ready to scale up their operations once aid access increases.

Partners also report that no large-scale reconstruction efforts have begun, with promised temporary shelters yet to materialise. They report that nearly all families in Gaza are living in poverty, with employment opportunities extremely limited. Only a few humanitarian organisations continue to operate, employing small numbers of local staff.

Very few partner staff have returned home under the ceasefire conditions, as they do not have homes to return to. They continue to shelter in churches under incredibly challenging conditions.

Caritas Jerusalem stated that it "remains steadfast in its mission to serve the most vulnerable with compassion, professionalism, and faith." The team continues to operate under extremely challenging conditions, focusing on southern Gaza where it manages seven medical points. The organisation has resumed infant formula distribution and reopened its main medical centre in the north, but staff cannot return due to unsafe conditions.

CRS has reopened its Gaza City office and resumed distribution of food, hygiene kits, tents, and cash assistance. CRS has supply pipelines ready in Jordan and Egypt and is prepared to scale up operations immediately if access routes are improved.

Kirsten Sayers, CEO of Caritas Australia, said, "Our partners in Gaza are ready, they have the teams, the supplies, the infrastructure, and the community relationships to make a real difference. What they need now is safe, sustained access. We urge all parties to honour the ceasefire and remove any barriers that continue to prevent life-saving aid reaching those who need it most."

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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Media contact: Tara Harvey 0484 002 021 tara.harvey@caritas.org.au or caritasmedia@caritas.org.au