

Caritas calls for decisive international action as Middle East humanitarian crisis deepens.

Caritas Australia has joined Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Middle East and North Africa in calling for urgent international action to protect civilians, secure humanitarian access and prevent further suffering across the Middle East.

The joint statement, issued as world leaders gathered for the United Nations General Assembly, warns that civilians in the region continue to face conflict, displacement, restrictions on basic freedoms and services, and the destruction of homes and essential infrastructure.

It notes that “the humanitarian crisis across the Middle East is not only measured in lives lost or homes destroyed. It is also measured in families unable to return, communities unable to rebuild, children unable to learn, health systems unable to function, and people unable to live safely in their own homes.”

In Gaza, most of the population of 2.1 million people remains displaced and confined to approximately 30 per cent of the Gaza Strip. Only around 40 per cent of the humanitarian funding required for 2026 has been received, while significant numbers of people continue to face acute food insecurity and inadequate access to shelter, clean water, sanitation and other essentials. Humanitarian access also remains severely constrained.

The statement also raises serious concerns about increasing deaths, injuries, displacement and movement restrictions in the West Bank; continued bombardment and displacement in southern Lebanon; and the wider escalation of military activity in across the region.

Caritas Australia CEO Kirsten Sayers said the international community must move beyond expressions of concern and take meaningful steps to protect civilians.

“Across the Middle East, ordinary people are paying an unbearable price for decisions over which they have no control. Families are being displaced, children are losing access to education, health systems are struggling to function, and communities are being denied the opportunity to rebuild their lives.”

Caritas Internationalis and Caritas MONA are calling on governments around the world to undertake sustained diplomatic efforts that:

- Secure fully respected ceasefires across affected areas
- Protect civilians and civilian infrastructure in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law
- Ensure safe, timely, sustained and unrestricted humanitarian access
- Prevent forced displacement and support the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced people
- Uphold the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries across the region
- Pursue accountability for violations of international law through appropriate national and international mechanisms
- Reduce hostilities and prevent further regional escalation.

Caritas Australia continues to support humanitarian responses in Gaza and Lebanon through trusted local partners who remain present in their communities, delivering assistance despite severe insecurity and access constraints.

Kirsten Sayers said a locally led Caritas presence was vital in allowing assistance to continue in some of the region’s most difficult conditions.

“Our partners are not outsiders arriving after a crisis. They are part of these communities. They are neighbours serving neighbours, remaining alongside people before, during and long after an emergency.”

“People across Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and across the wider region need more than words of concern. They need protection, humanitarian assistance and the opportunity to live safely and rebuild their lives. Silence and inaction cannot be the international community’s response to such profound human suffering.”

Caritas Australia calls on Australians to stand in solidarity with all civilians affected by the crisis through prayer, advocacy and support for humanitarian assistance.

To support Caritas Australia’s Emergency Appeals in Gaza and Lebanon, visit www.caritas.org.au/emergency or call 1800 024 413 toll free.

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