

Report on a field visit to Gaza 27th - 29th
May 2018



During my three-day visit I heard about the deepening poverty in Gaza. People are hungry, there is food in the shops but more and more people cannot afford to buy. A man told me that one can buy a kilo of tomatoes for a shekel (\$0.28/Euro 0.23/Sterling 0.21) but many cannot afford even that. Schools are closed for the summer break and the streets are full of children begging. Ameen Sabbagh, Administrator of Caritas Jerusalem in Gaza, told me that he saw Caritas staff share their lunch sandwich with hungry children. People are not starving but many are hungry.

Ameen explained that during this time of deepening poverty and thousands injured since the escalation of violence along the Israeli border, Caritas is concentrating on medical work including emergency trauma clinics. He said one of the most distressing things he has to deal with is people coming to the clinic asking for help to buy cancer drugs not available in government centres. Many are parents of children with cancer. The children are suffering, drugs are not available, they cannot get out of Gaza for treatment, and the only way to get chemotherapy and other cancer medication is to buy them in private pharmacies. These are expensive drugs that the poor cannot afford. Those who can get the drugs take them to a government hospital to be administered

to the child. He told me about a man with advanced kidney cancer crying in pain because he had no adequate pain killers. Cancer drugs are normally given free by the government but there is none in the hospitals now. We hope these essential drugs will soon be replenished. In the meantime we want to help the most needy cancer patients, especially the children.



I visited one of our emergency trauma clinics near the Israeli border where we treat less seriously injured and those discharged from hospital who need ongoing care. (The salary of the doctor is covered by OBOS). All the injured I met were young men with gunshot wounds to their legs. They will recover but thousands with serious injuries, including lower limb amputations, will be disabled for life.

Caritas Health Centre in Shati Camp offers medical, gynaecological and dental services with pharmacy, path lab and admin backup. It is also the administrative hub for all our outreach work. Currently, in addition to the Health Centre, we have 4 mobile medical teams working in collaboration with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) throughout the Gaza Strip. One of these teams provides primary health care in 10 locations along the Israeli border about 2 Km from the fence. A second team comprised of a surgeon and two nurses works near the border area in the north of the Gaza Strip

and Gaza city treating those injured in the recent border violence. We work in collaboration with International Medical Corps, Medicine San Frontiere and local CBOs. Two other teams work on a Trocaire-funded project to de-worm 6,000 three to six year old refugee children in the north of the Gaza Strip and Gaza City where intestinal infestation is very high. All the children have lab analysis and receive medication and fortified biscuits. Ameen told me how some parents give the children fewer biscuits than recommended, spread them out over a longer period, and share them with their other children, all of whom are hungry.



medicine, and for peace and justice for all.

Sr Bridget Tighe FMDM
General Director
Caritas Jerusalem

We urgently need:

1. Funds to buy emergency cancer drugs and analgesics for children and adults who come to us while government stocks are totally depleted. We hope that international organisations will replenish essential supplies within a few months. We do not stock cancer drugs because they are normally provided free by the government.
2. An additional Admin Assistant to cope with the increased work that is putting unsustainable strain on the small core admin staff. We need \$10,000 to cover salary for a suitable qualified person for one year. Any donation towards that, even for a month, would be a great help.

Most of all we need prayers for those suffering that they will get food and