



Dear friends,

This month we want to share with you the exchange summer camp that we had with our friends from Spain. Working with the youth, honing their skills and giving them the opportunity to live the real life of the Palestinians is an invaluable experience for them.

We are truly happy to have launched a project in Gaza which targets the senior citizens, a stratum that is mostly ignored and neglected in our community. This segment of the society has no income and no government support whatsoever and serving them is a privilege to us.

Caritas Jerusalem was also able to provide school kits for the needy students and wheelchairs to those who needed them most in Jerusalem.

We thank all our friends and partners who give to us generously and trust in the work of Caritas.

Best regards,

George Handal  
Acting General Director  
Caritas Jerusalem

### **We care for the senior citizens**

*Leviticus 19:32 “You shall stand up before the gray head and honour the face of an old man, and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.*



It is 8.00am on Monday morning and Caritas Jerusalem health centre on the outskirts of Al-Shati Camp in Gaza city is abuzz with activity. Three vehicles move off to remote and marginalised areas in different parts of the Gaza Strip carrying mobile medical teams, each with medical diagnostic equipment and boxes of medicine. In eight areas Community Based Organisations (CBOs) provide space for Caritas clinics where sick children, people with high blood pressure and/or diabetes, and pregnant women receive high quality care. All will be examined by specialist doctors and depending on their need they will have path lab analysis, ultrasound scan, medication and health and nutrition education. In the health

centre, that also serves as the hub of all this outreach activity, a dentist, gynaecologist and paediatrician prepare for a busy day as do the nurses, pharmacists and lab technician. The waiting area soon fills up but what attracts most attention is the steady, if slower, approach of senior citizens, women and men, who make their way to the clinic where a project Health and Human Rights for the Elderly (HHRE) is in full swing.

Many come walking, alone or helped by a family member, some have crutches, a few are in wheel chairs. Next month the medical team will begin visiting the elderly housebound in their homes. This project is generating curiosity, discussion and admiration in the wider communities.



The previous Friday in Al-Shati Camp a senior member of a mosque approached one of Caritas staff and said “Doctor, I bow in front of you and Caritas in appreciation for what you are doing. Old people have never had service like this before. Not only do you give us first class service, your staff treat us with dignity and respect.” Another man chimed in with a story of what he saw at a recent session. A frail elderly gentleman with a tremor accidentally spilled some liquid over himself and the floor. The man in the mosque related how Caritas staff immediately put the man at ease, cleaned up the spillage as if nothing

had happened and welcomed the man as a guest. A heated discussion followed. Why is Caritas doing this? Why are the elderly not treated with this dignity and respect in other places and so on.

The previous week after Mass in the local Church a smiling senior parishioner, recently registered on the project, thanked me and said “It was wonderful; the Doctora (female specialist physician) examined every bit of me from the top of my head to my toes!”



A major part of this HHRE project, implemented in two socially and demographically contrasting areas - a densely populated refugee camp on the outskirts of Gaza city and a marginalised rural area in the south-east of the Strip - is to raise awareness of the human rights and needs of the elderly. We hosted an Open Day in Khoza’ where Caritas staff explained the aims of the HHRE project and the local Mukthar (head man) and medical consultant spoke about respect for elders in Islam, how older people should be involved in the life of family and community, not be marginalised, and so on. This was followed by lively discussion. More such events are planned but the very fact that Caritas is focussing specifically on the rights of the elderly and giving them specialised medical and nutritional care is generating in the local community,

Church and Mosque, discussion and questioning about how the elderly are treated and should be treated. This is a development we had not anticipated and is more effective in raising awareness of the rights of the elderly than many lectures.



Thanks to our donors, Misesan Cara, Ireland and OBOS (One Body One Spirit Movement), Korea for their generous financial support of this project.

*Written by  
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Caritas Jerusalem*

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Youth Exchange camp with Caritas Spain**

*“in order to teach better, I have to learn better. Learn to know other cultures, like the Spanish, but learn also about our own history and realities, like in this camp”*



Caritas Jerusalem and Caritas Spain held their 6th annual youth exchange summer camp in Palestine, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of August.

Ten youth from the Palestinian Catholic parish of Beit Jala hosted 9 Spanish youth from the dioceses of Madrid and Valencia, during the two-weeks program, which was based in Beit Jala and held its activities across the country. The youth travelled to Hebron, Bethlehem, Jericho, Ramallah, Taybeh, Aboud, Nablus, Jenin, Burqin, Haifa and Akre.



The visits included historical places, community and cooperative projects, charity institutions, especially for children, churches and zones of difficulty under Israeli occupation and settlements. Manuel, 22, described the experience as “learning in new dimensions what is the meaning of resisting. I discovered a people that wakes every morning to invent new forms of building a life and make a future, in very hostile conditions”. He added “I personally take a lesson for my own life from the Palestinian people”. Raul, 21, said he feels to have “discovered new brothers and sisters. The Christians of the holy land. I now understand the meaning of calling them the ‘living stones’. Their witnessing is an inspiration to us”.

On the Palestinian side, there were new discoveries as well. Since the Beit Jala parish started hosting the camp, 5 years ago, the youth group has grown in number. This year new faces joined the exchange and gave bright new impressions.

Merna, 22, has participated in the camp for the first time. She explained that “As I got to know the Spanish youth more, I also discovered my own country. There are so many things I didn’t know about history, about how people live in other place of Palestine, about the different realities of life under occupation. I also discovered that we and the Spanish youth have much more similarities than differences”. Most of the Palestinian participants are students. But some are graduate workers, like Manar, 26, who is a school-teacher. She highlights the importance of “learning more on our own country. As a school-teacher and I know that in order to teach better, I have to learn better. Learn to know other cultures, like the Spanish, but learn also about our own history and realities, like in this camp”.



For the Spanish youth it was their first visit to Palestine. For Pau, 25, “the reality of the country was beyond my expectations. I was specially shocked by the situation in Hebron and the family we visited in the old city, next door to the settlers, submitted to restrictions and constant aggressions, or the check-point to enter the Abraham mosque. I couldn’t imagine living in such conditions”.

But impressions were also positive. For Blanca, “the most inspiring part was meeting the people who try to be creative to improve their communities. Like the fish-farmer in Jericho, who is learning new techniques of growing fish for his cooperative, or the Freedom Theatre in Jenin, that teaches theatre to the children of the refugee-camp, or the farmers which Caritas is helping in Aboud to protect their land and improve its production”.



The camp makes part of a wider cooperation strategy between Caritas Spain and Caritas Jerusalem, titled “The Peace Initiative” which includes youth exchange. It has been held 5 times in Palestine and once in Spain. It aims to develop youth’s commitment with solidarity causes, as well as their activity within their churches and communities. Spanish youth give witness talks about their experiences on their return to Spain, whereas Palestinian youth engage in voluntary action in their parish and community. “We hope to maintain the contact with each other and exchange on our different activities, in Palestine and Spain” said Mireal, 24, from Beit Jala. A perspective shared by Inma, 25, from Madrid, who insisted on “the importance to continue our activity along the year and exchange our experiences. That is building fraternity, through commitment”.

### **Distributing school kits with happiness and hope**

Notebooks and pencils are treasures for families who struggle to afford basic school supplies. These tools are the basics for learning. By offering school kits, you encourage children to attend school and further their studies. Caritas Jerusalem believes that education is the most powerful way to break poverty and develop the community.



Due to unemployment, most of the parents are unable to meet the school expenses or even prepare their children to get to schools. Therefore, Caritas Jerusalem's Social Services department and in cooperation with the Mormon University were able to provide 500 school kits to the most marginalized families in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

*"We see the joy of the children when we assist them in schools tuition fees and laughter on their faces when we give them the school kits"* Said Mrs. Mervat Naber, the Head of the social services department

Through school kit distribution, CJ not only seeks to enable children to follow their education but also wants to raise

to raise awareness about the importance of education in the society. This initiative is a step forward to empower young children to be educated and ready for the future.



"I have six children in a private school and our income is not enough to cover our basic needs and the school expenses and such donations are very important to us. I would like to express my gratitude to Caritas Jerusalem and the other partners." Said one of the mothers.

### **Move Freely with Wheelchairs**



Sonia is a 39 year old paraplegic single woman who lives alone in Jerusalem.

She suffers from acute intermittent porphyria (AIP) which is an enzyme deficiency. The only medicine available is extremely costly, we as Caritas Jerusalem and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem have been assisting Sonia for many years financially and socially because the poor soul has been diagnosed with the disease from her late teens and needs constant support and medications. Through the American Wheelchair Mission we were able to provide her with a wheelchair.

From the 17th to the 18th of August Caritas Jerusalem in partnership with The American Wheelchair Mission distributed eighty wheelchairs to organizations, hospitals, senior citizens' homes and individuals around Jerusalem.

Ten wheelchairs were granted to St. Louis Hospital, ten to St. Joseph Hospital, ten to Augusta Victoria Hospital, three to St. Vincent Des Paul Association, twenty-two to Princess Basma Centre, ten to Notre Dame des Douleurs, ten to Hospice St. Vincent De Paul and five wheelchairs were distributed to five individual cases in Jerusalem.



In 2011 Caritas Jerusalem implemented a similar project with The American Wheelchair Mission and they will be back next year with more wheelchairs, crutches, walkers and canes to distribute to the needy.

All the organizations, hospitals and individuals expressed their deep appreciation to Caritas Jerusalem for coordinating this project and The American Wheelchair Mission for donating the wheelchairs.

### **How can you help?**

Support our activities

Your support is essential to provide long-term assistance to our beneficiaries.

Please see below our bank details to make a donation:

Bank Name: Arab Bank

Swift Code: ARABPS 22110

Account number: 457793/0/510 USD

Credit Account: Caritas Jerusalem

Branch No: 9110

At Arab Bank in Al-Ram

P.O.Box: 2445-Al-Ram