

Dear friends,

Peacebuilding is one of the essential tasks of Caritas Jerusalem; passing the value of taking care of the elderly is another. It is very important for us to give the future generation a chance to live in peace by providing them the means to get together, play together and share a few laughs together; I am proud that Caritas Jerusalem has managed to inaugurate the opening of “the peace and friendship” playground in Jerusalem where all children are welcome to play together.

Taking care of lonely senior citizens who are neglected by the society at large and have no financial support whatsoever from the government is another intervention that Caritas Jerusalem operates for many years. We involve our young volunteers in many of their activities.

It is essential for us to raise a new generation that seeks peace where they are surrounded by conflicts, wars and hatred; and to value and respect their elders where society is obsessed by youth and the elderly are ignored.

Fr. Raed Abusahlia  
General Director  
Caritas Jerusalem

### *The Inauguration of the Peace and Friendship Playground*

*Creating hope and positive connections*



On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, Caritas Jerusalem celebrated the inauguration of the only green playground in the Old City of Jerusalem. This playground situated in the Armenian Quarter is one of the unique places where all children are welcome to play together as brothers and sisters.



Among the participants of the opening ceremony were the Custos of the Holy Land, the Nuncio of the Vatican, Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, the Consul General of Italy in Jerusalem, Mr. Fabio Sokolowicz, the head of the football federation of Italy and many others.



Fr. Raed Abusahlia, the General Director of Caritas Jerusalem stated “We believe that if children can play together, in the future they will be able to live and work together and also make peace in the Holy Land... They are the future of this Holy City and they have the right, the desire and need to live in peace.”



In a city that is sizzling with intolerance and lack of respect to the other we need more projects like this one in order to convey the message of peaceful coexistence to the youth. The purpose of this playground is to bring children together from different cultures and religions and make an attempt to promote the concept of friendly relationship and peaceful atmosphere.



The project was implemented by Caritas Jerusalem in collaboration with the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate and the Italian agency ‘Assist for Peace’.



## *Do you hear me?*



Hearing loss is normally encountered among the elderly, but also in younger people. Although age is the primary cause of hearing loss, there are other causes such as loud noise, infections, tumors in the ear canal.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, a lecture entitled “The Hearing Mechanism” was organized by Caritas Jerusalem’s Elderly Day Care Center (EDCC) in cooperation with Al-Nahda Women Association in Ramallah. The aim of the lecture was to raise the awareness of health problems that may be caused by hearing loss especially among the elderly.



33 of the senior citizens that we serve have participated in this lecture that stressed on the importance of, improving the prevention, detection and treatment of hearing loss. They have also discussed the role of audiology in helping people with deafness to adjust with life.

The lecture raised the topics on how to deal with people with hearing loss problems, the significance of regular checkups and ear cleaning methods.

This lecture will be followed by free hearing checkups for all the senior citizens in the center.



The Elderly Day Care Center (EDCC) was established in 1990 to serve the elderly who are left without a breadwinner and without care. It is a place to meet, socialize and spend the long hours of the day. In addition, it offers a healthy and well balanced meal three days a week, especially prepared to meet their nutritional requirements.



## *Gaza; the most isolated place on Earth*



*“I have witnessed the three wars on Gaza, the last one was the most horrifying; I was attending lectures at Al-Azhar University and many of the students fell down as martyrs and many others were injured, we all ran away home to be safe.” Said Mr. Jawdatt, Caritas Jerusalem’s project coordinator*

This was my first time visiting Gaza Strip as a Jerusalemite; I left Jerusalem around 11:00am, two hours later I was at Eretz crossing border waiting the Israeli soldiers to check my passport and my permit for allowed entry; after further investigations, I finally managed to pass the checkpoint.



Visiting Gaza Strip is a challenge to everyone; it is not easy to get a permission to enter Gaza; it is a long procedure with high security checks. The situation in Gaza is so desperate that

some are predicting another war but still others wish to get a leadership that might light a candle at the end of the tunnel for them.

As the two-year anniversary of the last war on Gaza approaches, Gazans are still living in harsh inhumane conditions where six hours of electricity a day is not enough to refrigerate food “I cannot store the meal for long due to electricity cut offs so I have to cook day by day and be careful of the amount so none of it will be wasted” said a mother from Maghazi.



The blockade of Gaza is the main reason of the humanitarian conditions where it restricts movement of individuals, food supplies, materials for constructions and fuel.

In a visit to Gaza which lasted two days in August 2016; Caritas’s staff and I joined a field trip to the local communities where CJ has intervened to improve the psychosocial situation and the living standards; we visited Al-Shaga`yeh, Al-Maghazi, Khuzaa`, Faraheen, Al-Sawarha and Biet Hanoun where people have no jobs, no raw materials to rebuild their houses and without any means of support but these people are doing their best with

whatever they have. I saw people using the materials of their ruined houses to build a shelter for their children.



*“I miss Bader” an expression that Mo`tasem keeps repeating since the death of his best friend. “Mo`tasem was a very clever, active and funny boy before the war of 2014; later during the war, he suffered from fear of sudden loud noises and planes, numerous nightmares and bedwetting, he was traumatized and became very insecure; he needed help and this is where Caritas Jerusalem was able help him to be a child again” said Mo`tasem’s mother from Biet Hanoun*

During my visit, I heard many stories about life in Gaza; some are truly worried and are thinking about emigration and leaving Gaza for a safe place while others are adamant to stay and still have the hope that the situation will improve.



Caritas Jerusalem is implementing various projects and programs in Gaza through the health center which offers primary healthcare and provides medical program to the local community. It also provides psychological support to the children who suffer the most from the continuous conflict.

Caritas Jerusalem believes that repairing the psychological damage among children is more significant than reconstructing the physical damage. Moreover, Caritas has been providing healthcare to people who have fled their homes to find shelter in schools during the last war, as well as food baskets, blankets and hygiene kits.

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