



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN  
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF  
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## Gaza: not numbers but people

The Order alongside the population with the Latin Patriarchate



The numbers fail to do justice to what is taking place in the Holy Land. It is not a matter of numbers, whether it is the tens of thousands of deaths in Gaza, the people killed on October 7 in Israel or the hostages. This is about people, of whom there are an infinite number, unjustly too many. Nevertheless, the numbers exist, and they are chilling.

Since October 7, we have received constant updates from the Holy Land. At the end of May, Sami El-Yousef, Chief Executive Officer of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, relayed the terrible situation in Gaza as follows: “The statistics issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) are devastating including 35,500 Palestinians killed and 80,000 injured with 60% in both categories being elderly, women, and children; 1.7 million people (75% of the population) who are internally displaced with 60% of residential units damaged as well as 80% of all commercial facilities; 1.1 million people reached catastrophic levels of food insecurity; lack of any electricity, sewage, water or communication networks.”

To this, the destruction of schools and the general disruption of services must be added, not to mention, “17,000 children who are unaccompanied as they were separated from their parents and are most likely orphans”, Sami El-Yousef sadly recounted.



After seven months of complete closure, finally on May 16, His Beatitude, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa (accompanied by Father Gabriel Romanelli, the parish priest of Gaza who had been stranded in Jerusalem since the beginning of the war), managed to enter Gaza and visit the Christian community that has gathered in the only Catholic church in Gaza.

This is the Church of the Holy Family, where those gathered there have been living since the start of the attacks. In a video message that was circulated worldwide, the Grand Prior of the Order stated, "The purpose of this visit is first and foremost to be with them, embrace them, support them, assess their conditions, try to understand what can be done to improve their situation, and help them in every possible way."

The Patriarch stayed for a few days during which he experienced the difficult—and sadly now daily—life in Gaza, with rationed food and electricity, and the constant sound of bombs exploding.



The Order of the Holy Sepulchre draws near to all these needs and tragedies, and the Knights and Dames have not withheld their generosity. To date, support of over one and a half million euros has been sent in aid, which is in addition to the regular contributions sent each month from the Grand Magisterium to the Latin Patriarchate.

This additional help primarily serves the daily sustenance of a thousand people in Gaza, all of whom are being hosted in the complex of the Church of the Holy Family, Muslims located nearby, and assistance throughout Palestine, where the situation is extremely complicated.

In fact, with unemployment reaching a record high at 45% in the West Bank, it is increasingly necessary to invest in job creation and humanitarian support for the most severe situations. This can be achieved through food vouchers, medical aid, and economic contributions for tax and bill payments that have thus far benefited over 12,000 people.





To imagine a future continues to be difficult. For now, the focus is on maintaining the dignity of life on a day-to-day basis for all those people who are entrusted to us as Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre.

A few days ago, on June 7, 2024, a moment took place in the Vatican Gardens to commemorate the 10th anniversary of that prayer for peace that Pope Francis hosted, bringing together the Israeli President, Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Ten years later, we continue to pray that peace will flourish, that peace will be chosen, and that peace will be built, at a time when it seems more challenging than ever.

For this, we the Members of the Holy Sepulchre seek the help of She who is the Queen of Peace and who embraces all, Mary Queen of Palestine and our patroness.

**Elena Dini**

*(June 2024)*