



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

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

## The challenge of education in the Holy Land



The Latin Patriarchate has organized remedial courses for the students of Gaza, who were left without education after the closure of schools due to the war.

### GAZA

During the 2023/2024 school year, more than five million dollars were transferred from the Grand Magisterium to the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. These funds are a stable and regular contribution to support the educational activities offered by the Patriarchate to the youth of the Holy Land, through the network of schools managed by the Diocese.

In a letter sent by Cardinal Pizzaballa – who also holds the role of Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – to the Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Filoni, on September 3, 2024, at the start of the school year, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem briefly shares the challenging educational landscape in the Holy Land, where students and teachers face countless daily struggles. “The recently concluded school year saw the destruction of several schools in Gaza and, in fact, the absence of classes for the 2023/2024 year. In Palestine and Jordan, rising unemployment has caused difficulties for families and an inevitable increase in the Latin Patriarchate’s contribution toward scholarships and aid for students. In Israel, the laws governing public funding for private schools result in some programs being funded in public schools but not in Catholic schools, which translates into an insufficient budget for our schools in Galilee.”

The situation in Gaza is truly tragic, as we well know, and the educational situation is one of the factors that adds to the ongoing disaster. Sami El-Yousef, CEO of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, shares: “Our two schools in Gaza were immediately closed, as both were converted into shelters at the start of the war. The Latin Patriarchate school in Zeitoun – continues Sami El-Yousef – continued to be used as a shelter for about 650 Christian brothers and sisters, while the Sacred Family school was initially used as a shelter for our neighbors in the Remal neighborhood, but it progressively suffered severe structural damage due to the multiple attacks it endured throughout the year.” The CEO of the Patriarchate emotionally shares what the parents present during the pastoral visit of

Cardinal Pizzaballa to Gaza in May 2024 asked, namely, “that their priority is for the Patriarchate to provide an education for their children. They asked for this even before food, water, and medicine! We have the responsibility to listen and respond despite the challenges.”

Thus, while during the 2023/2024 academic year all students from the two Catholic schools in Gaza were left without school, starting in June 2024, the Patriarchate organized recovery courses for 180 students located in the parish through some teachers who sought refuge there and are already employees of the Patriarchate. In addition, Sami El-Yousef concludes, “Until the end of August 2024, we continued to pay the salaries of all 80 school employees. Starting from September 1, we stopped paying the salaries of the staff who had already left Gaza, about 40 people, and we continue to pay the salaries of those who remained in Gaza, as well as the additional staff we contacted for the recovery education, since we did not have all the specializations in the parish.” In this way, the children can continue to study, and the adults working for them are able to receive a salary.



#### THE OTHER SCHOOLS OF THE LATIN PATRIARCHATE

Beyond the confines of Gaza, the schools of the Latin Patriarchate (a total of 43; 13 in Palestine, 24 in Jordan, and 6 in Israel) welcomed nearly 20,000 students this year and who have achieved noteworthy results. Many professional development activities were held for teachers, ranging from workshops for preschool teachers in Palestine – where learning techniques for young children were shared – to training for Palestinian teachers on methods for assessing learning or developing critical thinking. There were also specific sessions for French language teachers and meetings to help teachers take care of their well-being by recognizing signs of stress or burnout and being able to respond appropriately.

In addition to the activities offered to teachers, there are also various initiatives for the benefit of students, made possible through the funds sent by the Knights and Dames as part of their regular contribution. These include student conferences, drawing competitions, the opening of clubs in six of the Jordanian schools for students who wish to engage in environmental protection activities, field trips, the organization of events in Palestine for days dedicated to Palestinian heritage, and activities related to the most important holidays, such as Christmas.

Our students proudly demonstrate their ability to achieve significant success both academically and beyond the classroom, which makes us extremely proud. In Jordan, for example, Wael Hijazeen from the Karak school ranked third in the national secondary school exam results, known as Tawjihi. George Louis Barakat, from the Shefa-Amr school (Israel), came first in the Israeli Mountain Bike Championship, while Lauren Aram from the Reineh school (Israel) secured second place in the national Karate championship for her category.

**Elena Dini**

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