



20 October 2023

Prot. # 330/2023

Reference: Tragic Events in Gaza

Dear Esteemed Lieutenants,

I am sure you are following the tragic news out of Gaza and the emerging human made humanitarian catastrophe that is developing. The needs are great and growing. As of yesterday, we had 500 members of the 1,000 strong Christian community who took refuge at our Holy Family complex there which includes the Church, parish halls and facilities, three convents, a school, and the special needs homes run by the Daughters of Charity sisters where 80 people who are immobile are in residence. The responsibility to care for their daily needs since the beginning of the war two weeks ago has been a great responsibility, not to mention extending the generosity to the 400 Christians who took refuge at the nearby Greek Orthodox Church complex. We felt that was a huge responsibility without adding to the burden.

Last night, shelling in the vicinity of the Greek Orthodox St. Porphyrios Church led to the collapse of a two-story building at the entrance of the complex where tens of our people have taken refuge. Till now, there are 16 confirmed deaths with a similar number missing and are still under the rubble. The human stories are incredibly tragic, and I am truly shaken as I personally know many of them from my frequent visits and whom I visited in their homes, shared a meal with them, or simply listened to their challenges! Some are participants in our job creation program funded by the Order, while others are employees of some of our sister Catholic agencies working in Gaza.

As a result of this tragedy and given the reduced space available at the Greek Orthodox complex, many have relocated to our already filled to capacity complex. As I write this letter, we are locally appealing to our friends in Gaza to provide tents to be set up in the courtyard and playgrounds to accommodate their needs. We are simply overwhelmed, and the means available to us are being depleted quickly and I appeal for help from the members, even if they can spare only some change for their brothers and sisters in Gaza.

Yesterday I was in contact with His Excellency the Governor General and we discussed the needs for Gaza. What we both agreed is that we will not launch a Gaza specific humanitarian appeal, but rather ask those who wish to help Gaza to send any contributions to the general humanitarian fund and we can earmark new funds coming in to meet the growing needs in Gaza. If there are excess funds not needed in Gaza (which I truly doubt given the level of destruction and human loss), such funds will be utilized in the various approved categories of the normal humanitarian funds.

Given the gravity of the needs and the fact that we must respond and are becoming overwhelmed with the size of the needs, and after the blessing of His Beatitude Cardinal Pizzaballa and the support of His Excellency Governor Visconti, I appeal to you and through you to your generous members to support us in this time of great need. Any donation, regardless of its size will be most appreciated. All funds should be challenged through the Grand Magisterium who I am sure will expedite them to us. Many thanks in advance. You will be blessed abundantly for your generosity.

Sincerely,

Sami El-Yousef

Sami El-Yousef
Chief Executive Office



Cc: Members of the Grand Magisterium