

Responding to the emergency situation in Northern Gaza



The Caritas Jerusalem tent (among others in the area) reaching out to the affected people. (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

The situation there is devastating. We have observed already needy Bedouin families evacuating their inundated homes. Former residents are standing hopelessly looking at their village from a nearby hill and do not know what to do next.

Caritas Jerusalem is one of many organizations working in the area undertaking activities to help. Each organization has a tent to carry out their work. The Caritas tent number is 104.

Caritas Jerusalem Mobile Medical Clinic launched a health campaign to the people who became homeless in the affected area. The activities of the campaign included medical check ups and disseminating medicines to sick people.

Our health team conducted medical screening for 39 patients in one day and distributed 56 prescriptions for people from the area. In addition, through our medical center in Gaza, we will provide 250 parcels of hygiene supplies, which

April 2, 2007 – Gaza - On Tuesday, March 27th 2007 at 9:00 am, a huge holding pond of sewage burst flooding the Bedouin village of Um An-Nasir in the northern Gaza Strip. The village sits right next to the sewage pond.

The flood of sewage caused massive damage. Six people are reported dead and many others are unaccounted for or injured. More than 5,000 people live in this area; most of them have evacuated their homes due to the presence of the contaminated water.



A photo of the water which still remains in low-lying areas of Um An Nasir. (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

will include: Detergents and cooking items for needy people who lost their homes and are living in tents. Dr. Bandali El Sayegh, the medical director of Gaza Health Center, said that the area needs support, especially for the people who will spend the coming days outside of their homes until a solution for them is reached.

Organizational Responses

Most of the humanitarian organizations working in Gaza have reacted in response to the disaster. However, it became clear that the most important factor is the pollution and ongoing environmental problem, which will have to be dealt with in the future. Discussions on how to deal with this issue will have to take place soon. Caritas Jerusalem and our staff in Gaza asked for a meeting with all the organizations responding to the situation on Sunday (April 1) to organize the work and to better identify the needs.



Caritas Jerusalem's medical team setting up the medical clinic in the region of Um An Nasir. (Photo: Caritas Jerusalem)

The needs are tremendous, but the priorities for work there will focus on:

1. House repair and renovation
2. Infrastructure improvement
3. Food, storage sheds and hygiene supplies
4. A study of the soil of the affected area should be done to know the level of contamination and the potential for future health risks
5. General health monitoring for the area to prevent diseases from spreading

As a clearer picture of the situation develops in the coming days and following a careful assessment of the situation by all of the parties working in the area, additional interventions will take place according to individual organizational capacities, abilities and expertise.

In spite of this disaster, it was a miracle that it took place during daytime when most people were awake, men are at work, and children are at schools. If the sewage flood occurred during the night, many more victims would be in evidence with many more than six dead and tens of injured.

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