

January 7, 2009

## **ELCIC And CLWR Issue Appeal To Support Humanitarian Aid In Gaza**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada's (ELCIC) Global Hunger and Development Appeal (GHDA), Canadian Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) and their partners in the region have taken action to address the humanitarian needs of the many Palestinians who are unable to escape the escalating violence in the Gaza Strip. A joint appeal has been issued to support immediate relief efforts.

Through CLWR, the ELCIC is cooperating with other members of Action by Churches Together (ACT) International, including the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), to respond to emergency needs as the situation develops. Priority relief measures in the coming days and weeks include the provision of food items like rice, flour and high protein biscuits; cooking fuel; blankets; medical supplies; as well as psychosocial counselling.

Aid workers report desperate circumstances. Food is in extremely short supply. Fuel is running low. Mobile medical clinics have been destroyed by Israeli air strikes. Hospitals continue to receive a steady stream of patients; many of them civilians who were struck by shrapnel or falling debris while sitting in their homes.

"No one goes out on the streets except if they really have to," said Omar Almajdalawi from Jabalia in Gaza, an aid worker with ACT International member DanChurchAid. He tells that most people now live with open windows, despite the cold, so that the glass does not break into a hundred pieces from the impact of missiles exploding in the area.

At the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City, a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, supported by ACT International members, staff have been working around the clock to cope with casualties and are exhausted. Director Dr. Suhaila Tarazi reports "the hospital is in urgent need of medicine and supplies. There is no electricity in all of Gaza and so we are currently running off of generator power. We have very little supplies left -- enough to last for another week. If this crisis continues, we will be in a very dire situation."

CLWR has a long history of humanitarian work in the region through the LWF, of which the ELCIC is a member church, including support for the Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH) in East Jerusalem. AVH offers specialized medical services like cancer treatment and dialysis to Palestinians. The hospital does treat some cancer patients from Gaza and will need additional funds to cover the costs of housing, food, transportation, and other support for these patients and accompanying family members who are unable to return to Gaza.

To support relief efforts in Gaza, donations can be made to GHDA - Gaza Appeal as follows:

- Via the ELCIC Website: [www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca) (click on the Donate Now link)
- By mail: GHDA, 302-393 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, MB R3B 3H6 (please indicate "GHDA - Gaza Appeal" in the memo portion of the cheque)
- Through all ELCIC Congregations

Further information about the work of ELCIC's Global Hunger and Development Appeal can be viewed online at [www.elcic.ca/ghda](http://www.elcic.ca/ghda)

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