

MIDDLE EAST

Pizzaballa: The humiliation of Gaza is morally unacceptable

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"When you see with your own eyes what is happening in the Gaza Strip, it is difficult not to recognize that those people are experiencing humiliation that is very difficult to bear, morally unacceptable, and unjustifiable." This is one of the key passages from

Pierbattista Pizzaballa's speech during yesterday's press conference. Pizzaballa is the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The press conference was also attended by Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III. It took place on his return to the Holy City after visiting the Muslim enclave immediately following the Israeli attack on the Latin parish in Gaza on July 17. The attack left three people dead and a dozen wounded.

The cardinal continued: "Humanitarian aid is not only necessary; it is a matter of life and death. Every hour without food, water, medicine, and shelter causes profound pain; it is a death sentence. We have seen men endure long hours under the sun in the hope of a simple meal." According to health sources in the Strip, twenty children died of starvation yesterday alone.

"In Gaza, we encountered people crushed by the weight of war yet bearing the image of God within them. We walked among the wounded, the suffering, the displaced, and the faithful, whose dignity remains intact despite their agony," added Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III, sitting next to the Latin Patriarch. Both leaders launched an appeal-accusation to the international community: "Silence in the face of suffering is a betrayal of conscience."

Pizzaballa added, "There can be no future based on the imprisonment or displacement of Palestinians, or on revenge. There must be a way to restore life, dignity, and humanity." It is time to end this absurdity, end the war, and give absolute priority to the common good of the people."

The two patriarchs also made an urgent appeal for the release of those deprived of their freedom, the return of missing persons and hostages, and the healing of families suffering for so long everywhere.

This disproportionate war has caused too much devastation. Too many people have been killed unjustly. The equation used to justify Israel's response — that every Palestinian is a terrorist — is unacceptable. In Gaza, men, women, and children are desperately searching for aid amid rubble and debris, endangering their own lives. The two patriarchs were struck by the widespread hunger among the population, a weapon used by Israel. Zion Hagay, president of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA), is calling on the Israeli Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) to allow medical supplies and basic humanitarian aid into the Strip. Morally, there can never be any justification for the events unfolding in this strip of land. Pizzaballa emphasizes that, while they denounce what is happening in Gaza, they also recognize the solidarity of many parts of Israeli society. We are not against Israel or the Jewish people," he stresses.

"We are against the current policy in Gaza."

But what will the Holy Land look like at the end of this war? The road to reconstruction and reconciliation will be long. There are too many wounds between Israelis and Palestinians that will be difficult to heal. These wounds must be transformed into acceptance, and the hatred that now dominates must be transformed into gestures of love and brotherhood. "As shepherds of the Church in the Holy Land, we renew our commitment to a just peace, to unconditional dignity, and to a love that transcends all boundaries. Let us not turn peace into a slogan while war remains the daily reality of the poor," the two patriarchs concluded.

Despite repeated calls for a ceasefire and the reopening of humanitarian corridors, people continue to die in the Strip due to air and artillery bombardment. Heavy shelling has taken place in areas that had been spared until yesterday. The Palestinian Islamic Jihad claims to have lost contact with hostage Rom Braslavski, who was detained in the Strip after the latest Israeli army attack.

Yesterday, the Hamas Ministry of Health reported that 134 people were killed in the last 24 hours. There is no longer any place to bury the dead. Cemetery space has been exhausted due to destruction and evacuation orders forcing Gaza residents to abandon urban areas and traditional burial sites near their homes.

As Israel maintains control of the area, both Israel and Hamas are considering the conditions for a ceasefire, which would theoretically end the armed conflict and lead to the release of some hostages.