



Statement from Bishop Azar on Israel's Starvation of Gaza

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..." Matthew 25:36-37

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land is shocked and distressed by the images, videos, and reports of mass starvation in Gaza.

Months of Israeli siege have prevented all aid from entering Gaza. Now, only an inadequate trickle of aid is allowed in, available only at a few dangerous distribution sites, inaccessible to most people. 113 Palestinians, 81 of them children, have already died of starvation, dozens of them in the last few days alone. One in five children faces severe malnutrition. Meanwhile, over a thousand Palestinians have been killed and thousands more injured by Israeli forces while desperately seeking aid for themselves and their families.

Countless aid organizations including the United Nations warn that this man-made famine is reaching the point of no return. After their visit to Gaza last week, Greek Orthodox Patriarch Theophilos III and Latin Patriarch Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa reported starving people waiting for hours in the sun in hopes of a piece of bread. They are eyewitnesses to the fact that resuming aid is a matter of life and death.

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the global Lutheran community, I condemn this policy of extermination through starvation in the strongest possible terms. The Israeli government is weaponizing hunger to accelerate their ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from Gaza.

We call on world governments, faith leaders, international organizations, and all people of conscience to take any action possible to end this deadly siege and allow the free flow of aid. Even now, lifesaving supplies sit untouched in warehouses mere kilometers from those in Gaza who need them. Israel must face pressure to allow aid groups to resume safe, dignified, and effective distribution of aid.

As His Beatitude Theophilos III said after his visit to Gaza, silence in the face of suffering is a betrayal of conscience. As Patriarch Cardinal Pizzaballa said, we cannot be neutral.

Our Lord Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us this day, our daily bread." Today, we pray for our people in Gaza, that they may have their daily bread. We pray for food to reach the hungry, water to reach the thirsty, and medicine to reach the sick. We call out for an immediate ceasefire, an end to this genocide, and for justice to come to our land.

+Azar

Bishop Dr. Sani Ibrahim Azar
Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land