

Gaza's Christians bury their first casualty



Jalila Ayyad's widower George still had a black eye and bloodstains on his shirt as he processed ahead of her coffin, hours after the air strike that destroyed their home. They had to bury her quickly for there is no room in the hospitals' morgues and her body was torn to pieces.

Jalila, aged 60, was the first Christian casualty of a bloody Gaza war. She is also survived by two sons, but one could not be at her funeral because he is in hospital with serious wounds suffered in Sunday afternoon's Israeli strike. Their house was completely destroyed.



The family house

The Christian community in Gaza City, like its counterparts elsewhere in the Middle East, has been shrinking because of both conflict and unemployment.

The Community Survey of the Christians of the Gaza Strip conducted by Young Men Christians Association in Gaza in March 2014 shows that the number of Christian Households in the Gaza Strip is 390 Households, with a total of 1313 individuals. There is a decrease in the number of Christians in the Gaza Strip, the number was 1688 per capita in 1997, and 1375 individual in 2007, but it becomes 1313 in March 2014. The rate of decrease is 1.3% annually from 1997 to 2014.

Caritas Jerusalem is currently trying to transfer the injured son, Jeries- from Gaza hospital to St. Joseph Hospital in East Jerusalem in order to save his life (if possible). His condition is very critical, he lost both his legs; suffers from third degree burns in 70% of his body and has head injuries.

So far, the war has killed more than 1 030 Palestinians, most of them civilians including a large number of women and children, 43 Israeli soldiers and three civilians inside Israel.

The bombs hit and kill - they don't discriminate between civilian or militant, Christian or Moslem.

“The cost of this war, like other wars, is not the cost of destruction and mere numbers of casualties from both sides. These are people! Not numbers and figures but human beings who have names, parents, children, brothers, sisters and beloved family members.

I know this poor and simple family very well, for Jalila, God Bless her soul is originally from Taybeh, where I was the parish priest for ten years,” Stated Fr. Raed Abusahlia, General Director of Caritas Jerusalem. “They used to attend mass on Christmas and Easter in Taybeh, when they were able to get a permit to get out of Gaza. They were always very kind with me...

Now that they have lost everything- **mother was killed, son is critically injured, home is completely destroyed**- we at Caritas Jerusalem will do everything possible to stand by them and support them in an attempt to alleviate their pain, agony and suffering.”

When will this madness end?