



# THE BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK'S LENT CALL 2024

*“Let justice roll down like  
waters and righteousness  
like an ever-flowing stream”*  
Amos 5:24

## Week 4: Caring for the people of the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East

In recent years the Lent Call has raised money to support the work of various medical establishments in the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East. The hospital offered help to many people who would not otherwise have had access to medical care. In 2016 we supported the work of St Luke's Hospital in Nablus and the Al Wafa Rehabilitation Hospital in the Gaza Strip. Then in 2018 we supported the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital also in the Gaza Strip and in last year we supported the Arab Episcopal Medical Centre in Ramallah.

It is hard to imagine how the people of Gaza and the West Bank managed even with this provision, but now that the situation in Gaza is as it is, and the facilities have been damaged and destroyed, it is even more difficult to conceive what the situation is like. The scenes that we see day to day on our screens are horrifying.

The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital is an 80-bed hospital that specialises in cancer treatment – relied upon by many for life saving treatment. The hospital is run by our Link Anglican Diocese and it is the only hospital run by Christians in the Gaza Strip as well as being the only cancer hospital there. The hospital looked after thousands of patients a month, performing hundreds of surgeries and radiology appointments. It was often difficult for patients to get the



**A young child receiving treatment from a healthcare worker in hospital.**

necessary paperwork to travel to their appointments, but it nonetheless offered a lifeline to those most in need. Following the attacks on 7 October 2023, it became even harder to obtain the permits necessary to visit the hospital.

Sadly, just a week after the outbreak of hostilities, on the evening of 14 October 2023, the hospital was damaged by rocket fire and four hospital staff members were injured. The blaze caused the most damage to the two upper floors of the Cancer Treatment Centre, with the mammography and ultrasound departments being the most affected.

Afraid of the bombing, many thousands of people had been living in the courtyard



Raising funds for  
projects that focus  
on peace with  
justice and resilience  
and well-being.

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**The Bishop of Southwark's Lent Fund Registered Charity No 1075122**

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**The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital before the rocket fire.**

of the hospital in the hopes of finding a place of relative safety as their homes were destroyed. On the evening of 17 October an explosion occurred in the courtyard where the people were staying, and it is thought that between 200-500 Palestinians died and more than 600 others were injured.

At the time of writing, the World Health Organisation says that eight out of 36 hospitals remain partially functional (nine in Southern Gaza and six in Northern Gaza). With 18 out of 72 of primary care centres that remain functional. Healthcare was a scarce commodity even when everything was functioning but now, the situation is truly devastating with so much not functioning and with the possibility of more being unable to sustain care.

The Al-Aqsa Hospital, which is in the Middle Area of Gaza is in a very, very difficult situation. There are reports that there are only five doctors remaining at the hospital with between 600-700 patients needing treatment. It is not easy to get accurate information concerning what is actually happening and what is functioning in Gaza. The figures and situations are changing but of one thing for certain is: things will not be better for a very long time and are likely to get worse before they might slowly, begin to get better.

In the meantime, many thousands of people are displaced and in need of the most basic help and care. The Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East is an important provider of medical care, particularly specialist care for diabetes, as well as helping to provide hospice

and rehabilitation centres. There are also schools and residential homes for those who have lost their families. The need is great and is ever increasing.

At this time when we know that our healthcare services here in the UK are under pressure, it is not always as easy to access and treatment can be delayed – we can, at least, know that there is help available and so we might have hope. The people of Gaza and the West Bank and those in other parts of the Diocese – which Archbishop Hosam leads – cannot be sure where help will come from for everyday life as accessing healthcare and other services is even harder.

As we pray for peace with justice for all people of Gaza, the West Bank and Israel, and as we think of all those who have been affected by this terrible war and its consequences – what gift could you offer? Even if the amount that you can offer is small, money given to the Bishop's Lent Call this year will help to ensure that the Diocese of Jerusalem and the Middle East can do as much as it can to help those who have so little to feel that they are cared for and not forgotten.

Please pray for them all and please do give whatever you can to support the work of our Link Diocese. Thank you.

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