

**International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People 29<sup>th</sup> November**  
**2018**

Dear Friends and Partners

Another year has passed. Occupation, expanding settlements, house demolitions, detention and imprisonment of minors, the daily struggle of farmers to reach their land to cultivate and care for it, and the ever-present checkpoints deep within the West Bank continue. In Gaza the “March of Return” that left dozens of Palestinians dead and hundreds wounded, and extensive damage to Israeli land near the border fence, brings again into focus the 11year blockade that keeps more than 2 million people imprisoned within a total area of 365 square kilometers (141 sq miles). These facts are well known, so well know that over the years the conscience of the world has become accustomed to them and immune to the horror of one people occupying and dispossessing another for more than 50 years.

On a massive scale the abnormal has become the norm. Children in the West Bank are growing up believing that on the way to school it is normal to pass through checkpoints overseen by young soldiers with guns, many are terrified by night raids on their homes where they see their brothers or sisters taken away in police cars without an adult family member to accompany them, children of farmers see their olives stolen and trees destroyed without anyone being brought to justice. In Gaza children over the age of 12 have lived through four major wars. During a recent thunderstorm, children screamed in fear thinking it was bombs exploding, while a few kilometers away on the other side of the fence Israeli children run in fear to shelters as sirens warn of incoming rockets. Neither community is safe and free and the words of Nelson Mandela come to mind: “For to be free is not merely to cast off ones chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others” and again “We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinian people.”

In Caritas Jerusalem we pray for justice and peace for all who live in this Holy Land and we provide humanitarian aid to the mostneedy of our suffering brothers and sisters. On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People please join us in prayer for renewed hope in the mercy and goodness of God, and for the Palestinian and Israeli people, the courage to cast off the chains of fear and live in a way that respects and enhances each other’s freedom. Then, by God’s grace, justice and peace shall embrace. (Psalm 85:10)

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