
Cardinal Zuppi: Visit to Bethlehem's Caritas Baby Hospital. “It’s always too late to protect human life. The suffering of children is unacceptable”

(Bethlehem) Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, Archbishop of Bologna and President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, has visited the Caritas Baby Hospital (CBH) in Bethlehem. The visit was planned in the context of the diocesan "Peace and Solidarity" pilgrimage currently taking place from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. The delegation, made up of 160 participants from various Italian cities, was led by the Cardinal himself.



[representing the CBH Communications Office. She showed the cardinal a short video describing the history of the only children's hospital in the West Bank, which this year celebrates 71 years of continuous activity. More than 410,000 children under the age of 18 are estimated to live in the area. CBH's situation today is a testament to the war in Gaza, which makes travel even more difficult for families whose children are in need of medical care. "To reach Bethlehem they need to pass through hundreds of Israeli checkpoints. In the first three months of the war, 7,000 children missed out on treatment for this very reason," Khamis said. "On top of that, the already acute financial difficulties have been exacerbated with the war. The lack of tourism and pilgrimages have left many families unemployed and unable to afford medical care." But the CBH remains committed to helping sick children: "In mid-March last year," says Khamis, "a group of 68 children arrived in Bethlehem from Gaza. They were admitted to a specialised clinic and are now under the care of the organisation SOS Children's Villages. Medical assistance is being provided by the Caritas Baby Hospital." **Unacceptable suffering.** The Cardinal, accompanied by Sister **Aleya Kattakayam**, Director of the Institute of the Virgin Mary, which runs the CBH, then visited the various wards, greeted some of the young patients and their parents, and spoke with doctors and nurses. "This is a place where the suffering of so many children is treated, but not everywhere is this the case," said Zuppi at the end of the meeting. "This place should be our starting point in order to understand the needs of the youngest, of the most vulnerable, so that they receive everything they are entitled to."](#)

["The suffering of children is unacceptable, an effort must be made to bring adults to their senses."](#)

[In this context, he recalled the Israeli children killed by Hamas terrorists on the 7th of October, along with the Palestinian children who have died in Gaza during the last eight months of war. "Some of those small children from Gaza", the Cardinal explained, "have been treated in Italian hospitals, including in the city of Bologna. Their accounts are horrifying, including stories of amputations without anaesthesia.](#)

[Unfortunately, we always arrive too late to save human lives.](#)

We should ensure that they have a meaningful life ahead of them. When we look at them, we understand our obligations.” “Hatred, the terrible logic of violence, the inability to understand the suffering of others and to care only for one's own, are all factors that lead to more violence and more innocent victims, including children,” added the Archbishop of Bologna, quoting the words of Rachel Goldberg-Polin, mother of Hersh, the young man held hostage by Hamas in Gaza. The Cardinal had met her at the beginning of the pilgrimage. “This woman reflected on her pain and the pain of many in Gaza. Rachel said something very important: 'I don't want my pain to cause more pain. The purpose of this visit," Zuppi concluded, "is to understand the suffering and to face it with one heart, to show closeness, to help and to pray, in order to find the strength and the courage to bring about a ceasefire and to open a path for dialogue.”

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