

Despite the efforts of Gaza authorities through strict quarantine regime and restrictions on exit and entry to the strip that has managed to prevent community transmission of the virus, cases have been reported outside of quarantine centres confirming the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic to the Gaza strip.

Caritas Jerusalem, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, has been offering Mobile Medical services and the Health Centre which provides a range of specialist primary health care services. When the first cases started in March, amid fears Gaza's fragile healthcare system could not cope with the pandemic; the MoH called NGOS and healthcare providers, including Caritas, to prepare an emergency plan in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak.

As of Mid-August the number of cases had reached 243 people which prompted the authorities to declare a state of emergency, imposing a curfew seeking to detect any other infections and stop the spread of coronavirus among the strip's densely populated neighbourhoods. Residents have been ordered to stay home while businesses, schools and service facilities are closed, consequently we had to close our Health Center and stop our outreach work in Gaza.

With the cases spreading rapidly, reaching 581, last week Caritas Jerusalem was called upon to activate its developed contingency plan which includes cessation of current outreach work, and activation of Mobile Medical Teams to treat non-Covid-19 patients in their homes.

This Emergency plan has now been activated in coordination with MoH by forming five mobile medical teams (MMTs) each consisting of a physician, a nurse, and a driver, offering basic primary health care in designated areas throughout the Gaza Strip. When a call is placed to a MoH designated number, the call responders alert the nearest mobile team which will visit the patient's home for medical examination, wound dressing, and provide the needed treatment.

For the people of Gaza, already suffering from years of blockade, poverty and a rundown health service, the spread of Coronavirus is devastating.

Caritas Jerusalem hopes that the virus will be contained and prays for the health and safety of everyone.

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