

Gaza. Father Faltas (Custody of the Holy Land): "Children appeal to Italy for help and peace"

"War itself is a negation of humanity," said the Pope, renewing his appeal for peace at the end of the General Audience on Wednesday 24 January.



[Vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land, who has been at the forefront of providing humanitarian aid to children in the Palestinian enclave since the outbreak of the war in Gaza, told SIR.](#)



[since the outbreak of this absurd war," said the Egyptian-born Franciscan Friar. "It pained me not to be able to do anything for the innocent victims and to remain helpless in the face of such devastating images and news. Moreover](#)

[the people of Gaza are familiar with the Italian people's sensitivity and their good heart](#)

[and they asked me to arrange for the children to be treated in Italy." The vicar's plan is beginning to take shape, although many obstacles still need to be overcome. "The challenges in Gaza in terms of allowing in humanitarian aid and evacuating those who need treatment are enormous," he says. "After weeks of appeals to both sides, by both Palestinians and Israelis, and with the help of Egypt, a glimmer of a solution is in sight. The Italian government has offered concrete help to bring these young patients to Italy and then refer them to paediatric hospitals for specialised treatment of their various illnesses." Father Faltas was in Italy last week to meet with the directors of two important children's hospitals, the Bambino Gesù in Rome and the Meyer Hospital in Florence, who have offered their help, along with other children's hospitals and institutions such as the Puglia Region, the Emilia Romagna Region, the University of Perugia and the Republic of San Marino. "These children are in urgent need of medical care, they must be taken out, everything must be done to save as many lives as possible," said the vicar of the Custody. He added:](#)

["All the help that will be given to these children will be the result of a common action for peace."](#)

[It is planned that the first group of about 40 children, accompanied by their families, will receive medical treatment in Italy. The Italian Minister of Defence, **Guido Crosetto**, gave details of the initiative. He announced the transfer in the next few days with an air force airlift between Italy and Egypt, in the coming days. Other children are set to arrive on board the Italian Navy ship Vulcano.](#)



weakened by physical and moral suffering, tired and weary. It is our duty to be close to this humanity," Father Faltas explained, "to be in proximity and solidarity, even with an imperfect humanity, means 'being human', being close, offering support, caring with mind and heart is what Christ asks of his children". The Custody's vicar is also the principal of the schools of the Custody of the Holy Land, and for this reason, he says, he is "especially concerned about children, about their needs and necessities. I want them to grow up in peace and to receive an education that will make them honest and responsible adults in this tormented Holy Land." "In our schools, in addition to teaching, we try to provide models and suggestions for understanding and for showing solidarity with others, in order to prevent and counter all forms of prejudice and violence." The adult world, called to "rethink human education based on solidarity and understanding", must also take up this task. "Wars have shown us that what is lacking the most is the willingness to listen and exchange ideas, while hatred and violence prevail." On Wednesday, Pope Francis said: "Let us not tire of praying for peace, for an end to conflicts, for a halt to weapons and for relief for stricken populations." "Let us make his words, so rich in humanity, our own," Father Faltas concluded.

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