
Gaza Strip: the frustration of young people, but there are those who don't give up

"How old is he? Twenty-eight. What is his occupation? Nothing. There is nothing for him to do here except trying to get away and have a future beyond that wall. Because on this side there is nothing." **Miechel Tarazi** lives in Gaza with his wife Emily. He spoke to us about his son, Youssef, one of five, with a degree in economics. Three of his sons are married and living abroad, another is still studying with the same prospects as Youssef: to stay home without a job, only with the dream of a decent life." As he speaks Miechel turns his gaze to his parish priest, who is sitting next to him, Father **Gabriel Romanelli**, who listens to stories similar to this one every day. In fact these situations are widespread in the Gaza Strip, as the number of young people who populate it. It is estimated that 56% of Gaza's two million inhabitants are less than 18 years old. "Youth unemployment reaches peaks of up to 70%", explained the parish priest.



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"Studying in the awareness that you will hardly find a job, you won't be able to get married and settle down here where you were born and raised, somehow forced to leave, is not easy and is frustrating to say the least - Miechel pointed out - a dramatic situation that unites Muslims and Christians".

"Fifteen years ago - Father Romanelli said - there were over 3,500 Christians in the Strip, but today they number less than 1,000. Furthermore, in the last year, 25 to 30 thousand young Muslims have emigrated, via the Egyptian border."



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people are losing hope day after day and dream of leaving Gaza.



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I believe that the solution Two Peoples, Two States is now unfeasible, there remains the solution of one State where we can all live together.

One thing is certain: many Israelis and Palestinians are tired of war and violence and are willing to put themselves on the line to seek a fair and sustainable solution.

Church in the front line. In the economically and socially-depressed context of the Gaza Strip, the local Church continues to offer its "concrete and auspicious" contribution, as the bishops of the Coordination of the Holy Land were able to verify directly by visiting the new Caritas Jerusalem clinic, "Gaza Health Centre" and the "St. Thomas Aquinas" centre, set up in 2018 by the "Holy Family" Latin Catholic parish in the Strip, a service that has also obtained the recognition of the ministry of Education.



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"The purpose of our Centre - said Father Romanelli - is to create a new generation of well-trained 'leaders' capable of successfully entering the challenging job market of the Strip".

"The high level of education, also theological, linguistic skills, high professionalism combined with respect for all political ideas and religious beliefs, will contribute to the creation of jobs and consequently to the economic and social development of this land."

The first phase of the project, financed by the German chapter of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, saw the inclusion of 46 young people, another 16 are expected to join the programme which, the parish priest remarked, "requires continuity and therefore depends on the generosity of the benefactors." Randa, widow and grandmother, who hopes in this way to be able to help her grandchildren, is one of sixteen new participants. Like Lana, just over twenty-five years old: "a decent job will help us grow and live here. We want to stay in Gaza because it is our home."

Daniele Rocchi