

Vatican City, 14 July 2006

As the violence escalates in Lebanon and in the Gaza strip, Caritas calls on all sides to end the carnage, hold an immediate ceasefire and come to the negotiating table. Staff from Caritas in Gaza and Lebanon are risking their own lives to cater to the needs of the wounded, supply goods for civilians to survive and bring food for the children.

Indiscriminate bombings and hostage taking are against all moral and humanitarian laws and principles.

Guided by the social teaching of the Catholic Church, and in line with International Humanitarian Law, we are calling today for an immediate ceasefire, an end to all violence, and the beginning of constructive negotiations geared towards long-term solutions.

International Humanitarian Law decrees that states and authorities must protect civilians caught up in conflict, allow free access by humanitarian agencies to provide assistance to those affected and ensure attacks are not aimed at civilian targets. Any state or authority which ignores these rules is in breach of the very conventions that they have signed up to and which help keep our world civilised.

Caritas believes that a just peace is possible in the Middle East, and urges the international community and political leaders to uphold international law and help the people of Israel, of Palestine and of Lebanon to step back from the brink of full-scale war.

Caritas Internationalis has urged the members of the Confederation with seats on the UN Security Council to contact their governments with a view to calling for a ceasefire and the beginning of negotiations.

*Caritas Internationalis is a Confederation of 162 Catholic relief, development, and social service organizations working in over 200 countries and territories to build a world of justice and peace.*