

# Cardinal expresses horror at killings in Holy Family Church compound

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Published: 2 hours ago

Last Updated: 2 hours ago

Following the attack on the Holy Family Church compound in Gaza, which killed two women, on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> December, Cardinal Nichols expressed his horror at these events. In his statement, he writes:

'I am heartbroken at the information provided by Cardinal Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, of killings in the Church compound of the Catholic Parish of the Holy Family in Gaza City. I have immediately sent a message to His Eminence, expressing my horror at these events and assuring him of the prayers of Catholics in England and Wales.

'I have twice been warmly welcomed to this parish by its people. They are a remarkable community of faith and genuine service to their neighbours. Together with the dedicated Religious Sisters, they have continued to provide shelter and sustenance to many people during these weeks of warfare. They are a people who yearn for peace.

'The information provided by the Cardinal, copied below, gives a picture of seemingly deliberate and callous killing by IDF soldiers of innocent civilians: an elderly woman and her daughter in the grounds of a church. This killing has to stop. It can never be justified.

'I ask all people of faith and goodwill to continue to pray for an end to this conflict by all sides.'

### **Message of His Eminence Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa**

Around noon today, December 16, 2023 a sniper of the IDF murdered two Christian women inside the Holy Family Parish in Gaza, where the majority of Christian families has taken refuge since the start of the war. Nahida and her daughter Samar were shot and killed as they walked to the Sisters' Convent. One was killed as she tried to carry the other to safety. Seven more people were shot and wounded as they tried to protect others inside the church compound. No warning was given, no notification was provided. They were shot in cold blood inside the premises of the parish, where there are no belligerents.

Earlier in the morning, a rocket fired from an IDF tank targeted the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Theresa (Missionaries of Charity). The convent is home to over 54 disabled persons and is part of the church compound, which was signaled as a place of worship since the beginning of the war. The building's generator (the only source of electricity) and the fuel resources were destroyed. The house was damaged by the resulting explosion and massive fire. Two more rockets, fired by an IDF tank, targeted the same convent and rendered the home uninhabitable. The 54 disabled persons are currently displaced and without access to the respirators that some of them need to survive.

In addition, as a result of the heavy bombing in the area, three people were wounded inside the church compound last night. Furthermore, solar panels and water tanks, which are indispensable for the survival of the community, were destroyed.

Together in prayer with the whole Christian community, we express our closeness and condolences to the families affected by this senseless tragedy. At the same time, we cannot but express that we are at a loss to comprehend how such an attack could be carried out, even more so when the whole Church prepares for Christmas.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem follows this developing situation with great concern and shall provide additional information as needed.

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