



## **ASIA/HOLY LAND - After the cease-fire, we need to remove the Gaza blockade: Oxfam's appeal**

Jerusalem (Agenzia Fides) - The truce just signed "is not sufficient": to restore hope for peace, today it is necessary to end the embargo of Gaza that "for five years has been subject to a crippling blockade, which has limited imports and exports and destroyed its economy." This is what Martin Hartberg, NGO Oxfam spokesman in Jerusalem says, in a statement sent to Fides Agency. The NGO Oxfam, one of the largest in the world, with its headquarters in the UK, is present in Israel and Palestine with development projects for disadvantaged groups, measures concerning child protection, activities in the field of social and health support for rural development. In the note sent to Fides, Oxfam, welcoming the news of the ceasefire, remarks that the truce is essential, but it is only the first step: "Violence in recent weeks has been devastating for the people in Gaza and Israel. Hundreds of lives have been lost and homes, schools and kindergartens destroyed. People need to be able to go back to living a normal life. For over a week the school in Gaza and southern Israel have been closed and the activities through which people make a living in Gaza, such as fishing and agriculture, have been stopped because considered too dangerous." So now it is urgent to remove the blockade affecting Gaza: "Since the Gaza blockade began, five years ago - reports Oxfam - a third of the companies in Gaza have closed and 80% of the population is now in need of aid".

Oxfam asks the international community "to be bolder": "Only by removing the blockade we will have a chance to end the relentless cycle of violence that has devastated millions of lives. If the Gaza blockade continues and the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank remain separate, it will be impossible to reach the solution of two states for two peoples advocated by the international community." In recent days, Oxfam, along with 37 other NGOs, called on the international community to promote an immediate ceasefire to protect civilians and prevent a new humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 23/11/2012)