

Bethlehem University faces challenges amid ongoing West Bank restrictions

The Vice-President for Advancement of Palestine's only Catholic university tells Vatican News about the struggles of its students in the wake of new security measures in the West Bank.

Bethlehem University, established in 1973, is Palestine's only Catholic university, serving around 3,000 students.

Recently, its Vice-President for Advancement, Br. Jack Curran, FSC, spoke to Vatican News about the situation in the West Bank, and whether it has changed since the temporary ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas.

While the ceasefire has brought a sense of relief, he said, new restrictions imposed in the region, have made life extremely difficult for Palestinians. On the day the ceasefire in Gaza came into effect, he said, 90 additional barriers were placed around the city of Bethlehem.

The most significant obstacle to peace, Br. Jack Curran explained, is the ongoing lack of international recognition of the state of Palestine and its struggles. He emphasised that despite international recognition of Palestine by the United Nations, the Vatican, and some others, many countries have still not acknowledged the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. This lack of recognition, he said, continues to fuel instability, even in the wake of a ceasefire.

Challenges for Bethlehem University

For Bethlehem University, the occupation is manifested in daily hardships for students, particularly the 40% who traveled from East Jerusalem. Heightened travel restrictions meant students often faced unpredictable delays, sometimes strategically timed around exams. "It's a humiliating practice," Br. Jack Curran said, "one that directly impacts their ability to learn and thrive."

Br. Jack Curran concluded with an appeal to continue to pray for the people of the Holy Land. "We believe in the power of prayer," he said. "It makes a difference,

and we are deeply grateful for the solidarity of those who stand with us in faith and hope.”

You can make a donation to Bethlehem University here.

** Article published in Vatican News by Fr Adrian Danca.*