



INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA • 2015 NATIONAL CONVENTION SPECIAL EDITION

IOCC ASSISTS SYRIAN CHRISTIANS TRAUMATIZED IN DEADLY ATTACK



IOCC/GOPA

Fleeing for their lives, more than 2,400 exhausted and traumatized Christians from northeastern Syria sought refuge in the towns of Hasakah and Qamishli after their small communities were terrorized in February. The attackers targeted a stretch of villages along the southern bank of the Khabour River, where they burned homes and churches, murdered a fleeing 16-year-old boy, and abducted 150 Assyrian Christian men, women and children from their homes.

For those who managed to

escape the attack and seek shelter in Hasakah, IOCC with its church partner, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA), provided food, medical attention, and emergency aid. IOCC/GOPA, which has offices in both Hasakah and Qamishli, responded to the immediate needs of more than 1,000 displaced Syrian families seeking shelter at the Syriac Orthodox Church and the Assyrian Church in the Al Nasreh neighborhood of

Hasakah with the distribution of food parcels, bedding, infant clothing and shoes. More than 600 of the survivors who fled the onslaught are children.

IOCC, an ACT Alliance member, is one of the few humanitarian organizations inside Syria providing immediate assistance to displaced families and elderly who have endured four years of a brutal war. Working across Syria, IOCC has provided relief to 2.5 million vulnerable people inside Syria since 2012.

PROTECTING SYRIA'S YOUNGEST REFUGEES FROM MALNUTRITION

Melhem, 4, was withering away from a poor diet and loss of appetite when IOCC health workers met him last summer. Melhem's parents, who fled with him from Syria to safety in Lebanon, arrived with little money to buy their son nourishing food and worried daily about his well-being. Melhem was diagnosed with acute malnutrition during an IOCC health screening of Syrian refugee children living near Mount Lebanon. Left unchecked, the little boy faced a slow, painful death.

Thousands of Syria's refugee children in Lebanon face this deadly threat every day. In cooperation with UNICEF, IOCC is working to prevent and treat malnutrition in refugee children as well as improve infant and young child feeding practices among refugee women in Lebanon.

Three months after a regimen of eating specially formulated high-protein, high-calorie foods and milk to boost rapid weight gain, Melhem's cheeks are round again and his once bony limbs have filled out from the added pounds.

Nearly 80,000 refugee kids have been screened for malnutrition and more than 1,300 undernourished children like Melhem have been successfully treated by IOCC since 2013.



Tiziana Caullio/IOCC

CLEARING A PATH TO OPPORTUNITY FOR ETHIOPIA'S DISABLED



Dreams of being a helicopter pilot help Belete, 9, briefly forget the harsh reality of being born without legs. For all of his young life, Belete's immobility forced him to live in virtual isolation from other children his age. His father, a day laborer, and his mother, a home-based baker, barely make ends meet and couldn't afford to take time off to carry him to and from school each day. Instead, Belete spent most days in the yard of his family's modest home in Ambo, Ethiopia, placed in a secluded spot away from staring passersby where he would quietly pass the hours fashioning crude toys out of sticks and twine.

Through your support, a new wheelchair has given Belete the freedom to attend school with his siblings, where he is flourishing both in class and at play with his new classmates. IOCC, in cooperation with local relief partners, has provided wheelchairs to more than 1,800 disabled children and adults in Ethiopia. This newfound mobility is providing children like Belete with better access to education, and disabled adults with access to job training and startup capital to open small businesses and become a part of mainstream society. For Belete and many of the wheelchair recipients, it is the first time that they will have mobility – and an opportunity to move forward towards a world of possibilities.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.



This special edition of News & Needs is edited by Mark Hodde and Rada Tierney.



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IOCC is a member of

actalliance

ORTHODOX YOUTH GATHER FOR SERVICE LEADERSHIP

When record rainfall drenched the Midwest last summer and triggered massive flooding in communities across Minnesota and Iowa, teen volunteers from St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis were among the dozen members of an IOCC Orthodox Action Team who traveled to hard-hit Rock Rapids, Iowa, to help an elderly flood survivor clear waterlogged debris from his home. Orthodox Christian youth across the U.S. also have a history of eagerly volunteering their time and energy to assist IOCC in helping families rebuild storm-damaged homes and assemble emergency kits for disaster survivors.

IOCC is fostering this philanthropic spirit among Orthodox youth through its inaugural *Serv-X-Treme!* Youth Leadership Conference. Teen delegates appointed by hierarchs from the US pan-Orthodox community will come together in Minneapolis and Chicago this summer for a week of meaningful opportunities to serve others while developing a better understanding of Orthodox Christian philanthropy and diakonia, or service. Along with



Dan Christopoulos / IOCC

workshops led by Orthodox community leaders, teens will also spend time in hands-on service projects. *Serv-X-Treme!* Youth Leadership Conference is part of a broader effort by IOCC to develop the Orthodox Christian Action Network (Orthodox CAN!), a US-based initiative to nurture and activate the Orthodox community's value of philanthropy through volunteerism across all age groups.

IOCC EXPANDS EFFORT TO ADDRESS HUNGER IN GREECE



Eirini Vourloumis / IOCC

More than 300,000 children in Greece, like Eleni, 10, (above) now live in families that cannot afford to provide a healthy diet including meat or fish, according to UNICEF. One in four children lives in poverty, and one-third are at risk of living in poverty. With support from The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., a new IOCC

program will benefit these at-risk children and assist the growing number of Greek families seeking work and opportunities in agriculture-related businesses. As many as 30 agriculture cooperatives in Greece will receive support in food production, farming practices, and access to warehousing. In return, participating farmers will commit a portion of their yield to people in need in their communities, especially children facing malnutrition.

Since 2012, IOCC with relief partner, Apostoli, the social service agency of the Church of Greece, has been addressing the growing needs of Greece's most vulnerable families. In the past year, \$9 million in food distribution, medical aid and heating fuel have been provided through the "Give for Greece" program launched through support of The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc. The commitment by The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc. is being offered as a challenge grant, with every dollar contributed by donors to be matched dollar-for-dollar by the foundation. To learn more, visit iocc.org/giveforgreece.

FARMING SUPPORT YIELDS FRESH START FOR WOMEN IN THE WEST BANK



George Malki/IOCC

Across the West Bank, Palestinian women, particularly those living in the isolated north, struggle to support their families because of few opportunities to develop income earning job skills. For some of the women, their homes are too distant from city jobs, while others face cultural obstacles. "The economic situation is very difficult," said Mazouza, 53, a mother of six. "I only completed the 9th grade. Our customs do not allow us to go out and search for a job, so it is especially difficult for a woman. Besides, there are rarely any opportunities available for men, let alone the women."

Farming is often the only option available to these rural women, but an unreliable water supply and travel restrictions to work their lands hinder hopes of rising above hunger and poverty. IOCC is helping empower more than 200 women in the West Bank with sustainable methods to feed their families and earn desperately needed income. IOCC is providing the most vulnerable female-headed households and families with small children with agricultural supplies and training to grow high-yield, organic home gardens or raise livestock like sheep or poultry that will provide food and marketable farm products.

Hilweh, 48, was skeptical about some of the farming techniques including drip irrigation, but soon became a believer when she saw her home garden come to life and produce a newfound opportunity to help her family. "I managed to plant

tomatoes, eggplant, spinach and onions. I was able to sell most of the crop, some we benefited from, and the rest we distributed to relatives."

Newly trained egg producers like Rana and Mazouza share Hilweh's enthusiasm about their path to self-sufficiency thanks to the chickens and animal husbandry training they received from IOCC.

"This project is a gift from God," said Mazouza. "We are selling the eggs at a very good rate. Our monthly income from selling the eggs is about \$80 and of course we have them for ourselves at all times too. I am thankful to the donors and to IOCC."



George Malki/IOCC