



## Swift Response to Beirut Explosion Meets Immediate Needs

*Beirut resident Rodrigue shows IOCC's assessment team the badly damaged roof of his elderly aunt's home.*

### *Assessments Lay Groundwork for Long-Term Recovery*

On the evening of August 4, 2020, Mary got up from her chair and walked to her kitchen to get something to eat. That simple act saved her life.

Moments later, a massive explosion in Beirut's port sent a powerful shock wave across the city, shattering glass and damaging thousands of buildings, including Mary's. When an IOCC team surveyed Mary's house days later, she pointed out a broken chair—the one she had been sitting in before the blast.

"If I'd still been sitting in that chair," Mary said, "I would be dead now. I thank God that I'm safe."

With personnel on the ground in Lebanon for nearly 20 years, IOCC was already positioned to begin relief efforts. IOCC's staff in Beirut was uninjured and began work quickly. IOCC also coordinated with partners UNICEF and UNHCR to move additional IOCC health staff from ongoing projects to Beirut for emergency response.

In the ensuing days, nurses and counselors deployed to help the survivors. Other teams visited homes to check on vulnerable residents, particularly the elderly. While conducting home visits and needs assessments, IOCC personnel also distributed hygiene supplies, including soap and toothpaste.

*continued on page 2*

FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

Dear friends,

As we start the Church new year and I reflect on the storm that we are weathering together, I continue to be humbled by the resilience of those that we serve.

When a major explosion impacted our brothers and sisters in Lebanon, the resilience of survivors enabled immediate steps toward recovery.

When a derecho struck Iowa, resilience made it possible for Cedar Rapids residents to work with IOCC relief teams to organize a cleanup response.

When Uganda was hit by the pandemic – on top of existing challenges – the resilience of the Uganda Orthodox Medical Bureau allowed IOCC to equip Church-run hospitals to help fight against COVID-19.

As we've seen so often this year, lives can change in an instant. It is through your resilience that IOCC is able to move quickly to aid people facing tremendous challenges.

When you give, you demonstrate God's love in action, helping to extend caring hands at those times when people need it most. Please accept my gratitude for your part in helping IOCC reach so many around the world.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO



*Weekly hot meals for people in need represent just one part of IOCC's emergency response in Beirut.*

*continued from cover*

IOCC is collaborating closely with St. George University Hospital to support its work toward resuming service. An IOCC community kitchen began serving weekly hot meals to over 200 families, in partnership with Norwegian Church Aid, and partner Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe is helping IOCC expand its emergency programming. All relief efforts incorporate additional precautions to prevent further spread of COVID-19.

In addition, IOCC is assessing homes and small businesses to determine the repairs needed to help make them safe again. One local resident, Rodrigue, guided an IOCC team, including an engineer, through his aunt Shafica's house. Shafica, a 75-year-old retired schoolteacher, has high blood pressure and thyroid dysfunction. She had lived in the 165-year-old building for 50 years, but she can't afford the repairs that would make her home livable again.

Shafica's story is being repeated all across the city – by some estimates, 300,000 people lost their homes as a result of the explosion (Agence France-Presse). There is, however, a ray of hope. Immediately following the explosion, IOCC donors rallied to send emergency aid. Those funds are helping to meet the most urgent needs and laying the ground work for continued recovery. IOCC remains committed to working alongside the people of Lebanon, providing both short- and long-term assistance.



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## Picking Up the Pieces in Iowa

### *Helping Homeowners Deal with Derecho Damage*

“They were a Godsend to us,” said Eleonora, 68, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, after an IOCC-led team cleared six downed trees from her yard. “They did a beautiful job ... I cannot believe what they were able to do.”

On August 10, 2020, derecho windstorms – straight-line hurricane-force winds – crossed the Midwest, damaging homes, crops, and farm buildings, leaving millions across the region without electricity. Cedar Rapids was especially hard-hit. Roofs blew open; fallen trees blocked roads and tangled in power lines. Eleonora and her husband, Randall, sheltered in their basement for 45 minutes, praying as trees bent to the ground.

After first responders and emergency managers ensured the area was safe, IOCC organized a cleanup response in the Cedar Rapids area. First steps



*IOCC lead a team in Cedar Rapids (above) following destructive windstorms, including clearing fallen trees from yards and driveways (below left).*

can be overwhelming after a disaster, so IOCC helps people like Eleonora and Randall – who connected with IOCC through their Orthodox parish – get started. Eleonora told staff, “I cannot thank you guys [enough]. That’s a wonderful organization ... Keep doing the good work.”

IOCC’s site supervisor, along with two IOCC emergency response team leaders, spearheaded cleanup, and local Antiochian and Greek Orthodox parishes partnered in response. Working alongside IOCC’s trained team leaders were volunteers from AmeriCorps NCCC and NECHAMA Jewish Response to Disaster.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, IOCC has taken steps to protect the health and safety of everyone responding, as well as of the people they serve. Circumstances may be unpredictable, but IOCC’s commitment to effective service remains constant.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC), is the official humanitarian relief and development agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance, and advocacy.

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.



*A nurse demonstrates use of a handwashing station, just one type of equipment IOCC supplied to medical facilities in Uganda.*

## Bolstering Uganda's Fight against COVID-19

### *Equipping Church-Run Hospitals to Stop the Spread*

In Uganda, millions were facing challenges around health and food security even before the pandemic struck. With funding from the IOCC Foundation, a new project in the capital of Kampala is helping the Uganda Orthodox Medical Bureau (UOMB) fight COVID-19.

Partnering with the UOMB, IOCC has donated equipment and supplies—including personal protective equipment and other hygiene materials—to hospitals throughout the bureau's network, both urban and rural.

In a special ceremony, His Grace Bishop Silvestros of Gulu and Eastern Uganda dedicated the new equipment and officially launched the program, with the blessings of His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah of Kampala and All Uganda. The launch took place at Holy Cross Orthodox Hospital, with

health-safety measures in place and taking care to observe local protocols on public gatherings. Deliveries continue at health facilities throughout the country.

In addition to providing equipment and supplies, the project is training staff and improving communications, ensuring medical staff can consistently reach each other by mobile phone (the most reliable way to communicate in Uganda), and educating thousands of community members on preventing infection. Leveraging the Church's network, IOCC can reach more people; for instance, local priests are helping share best practices for staying healthy amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, this program is taking concrete steps to prevent the virus's spread and to protect health workers as they serve those who are ill.

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