



Christos is now studying hard to realize his dream of becoming a sports coach.

Hard Work and Perseverance Opens College Doors for Christos

ON THE ROAD TO A BETTER FUTURE: EDUCATION

Christos knew that a university education would be the key to his future. But despite his energy and hard work, his dream of studying to become a sports coach seemed out of reach.

Christos lives in Agrinio, in western Greece, where many families, including his own, have never recovered from the Greek economic crisis more than 10 years ago. Continuous wage cuts and slow growth have made it difficult to afford even necessities.

In addition, Christos is one of five children in a low-income family. Three of his siblings are already studying at university while also working to cover their living expenses. With his family unable to support his studies, Christos was determined to do the same—working two summer jobs in Santorini to earn money for school.

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in Greece

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in Gaza

From the
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen! The joy of Pascha remains with us as we continue to celebrate the triumph and resurrection of our Lord.

We continue to thank and honor Christ by remembering His charge to care for our brothers and sisters. Your generous almsgiving helps IOCC carry out this work, both here and abroad.

In this edition, you will again see the difference your gifts can make, from helping a Syrian family recover after surviving a church bombing, to restoring a boy's confidence in Gaza, to helping a young Greek man pursue education and a career that will benefit his community.

The team at IOCC thanks you for your support of our programs. With your help, we can continue to bring hope and light to people in times of need.

Yours in Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou
Executive Director & CEO

“Christos quickly applied and was accepted. He is deeply grateful.”

cover story continued

“From an early age, we all learned the importance of personal effort and self-reliance,” Christos said. “Following the example of my older siblings, I have also been working from a young age, aiming to contribute to my own expenses and to pursue my education with dignity.”

Then, Christos's parents told him about the Scholarship Program for Private Vocational Schools (SAEK), a program run by IOCC partner Apostoli. He discovered it offered a sports coaching program—the very field he hoped to enter.

IOCC funds SAEK through the San Antonio Area Foundation/the Santikos Fund. The program focuses on young people from low-income families, covering two years of tuition at private higher vocational schools in Thessaloniki and Athens. It currently supports 16 students.

Christos quickly applied and was accepted. He is deeply grateful. “This help is very significant support for both me and my family,” he said, smiling. “The opportunity to study for free allows me to work at only one job instead of two, and helps cover my living expenses. The trust you have placed in me motivates me to work even harder and to honor this opportunity with dedication and responsibility.”

Rama's Recovery After Damascus Church Bombing

RESTORING A FAMILY'S WELL-BEING: EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Last June, Rama (not her real name) and her family were attending Divine Liturgy at St. Elias Church in Damascus as they did every Sunday.

When suddenly, a bomb went off in the church.

Rama and her family survived, but one of her sons was badly injured. To make matters worse, he was the family's breadwinner. Since he could no longer work, Rama, her two adult sons and three younger daughters, were left with no income—and terrible stress.

"After my son's injury," Rama recalled, "our expenses increased while our income stopped. I often worried about rent and food for my children."

Seeking help, Rama registered with the Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development, the charitable arm of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East. There she learned that her family, and others affected by the attack, could receive help through an IOCC emergency assistance program.

Rama's family is one of nearly 100 families that received one-time cash assistance to help relieve financial burden and to pay for essentials like food and rent. They were also invited to IOCC's psychological first aid sessions, which provided support to more than 400 children and adults.



One of IOCC's psychological first aid sessions in Damascus, like those attended by Rama and her family.

"The cash assistance helped us pay our rent and buy food, while the psychological support session gave me strength to cope with stress," says Rama. "I feel more stable and hopeful now."

IOCC'S FIVE SECTORS

IOCC's work spans the globe and covers five key sectors of humanitarian relief and sustainable development:

- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)
- Sustainable Livelihoods
- Food Security and Agriculture
- Health

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.

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.

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Yousef Smiles Again

TREATING INJURY; RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN GAZA: **EMERGENCY/HEALTH**



"Yousef plays with other children and goes to school with joy," says his mother.

**HOW WOULD IT
FEEL TO CHANGE A LIFE
EVERY MONTH?**

Find out at iocc.org/monthly



"Yousef is smiling again," his mother said. "That is something that I thought I'd never see."

Yousef (not his real name) has undergone more hardships than any 10-year-old child should endure. He and his family lost their home during the conflict in Gaza, and he missed two years of school as the family was repeatedly displaced.

Worse yet, his right hand was seriously injured, and he suffered from severe trauma as a result.

"Following my injury, I was afraid to go outside," Yousef said. "I stayed home most of the time and could not use my hand like before."

His mother worried that he would never return to normal. But then, she discovered hope.

"I heard about IOCC activities through the registration announced by Al Tawasol Forum Society (TFS)," his mother continued. "The team explained the project and encouraged us to bring Yousef. It gave us hope that someone cared."

Yousef joined Enhancing Educational Opportunities and Wellbeing for Gaza's School Aged Children project, ran by IOCC and TFS and funded by Diakonie ACT Austria. The project has helped 300 children. He took part in more than 70 educational therapy sessions to catch up on his schooling and was taught exercises to strengthen his hand.

Yousef also received psychosocial support and took part in extracurricular activities—all of which helped him overcome his fear and rebuild his confidence.

"Now I can play with my friends and write with my hand again," says Yousef, with a smile. "I am not afraid anymore."