

The Third Update from the Disaster Zone

Dear Prayer Partners,

We hereby provide you with the third update regarding the ongoing situation in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that struck our country 140 days ago. The catastrophic events resulted in a staggering loss of over 50,000 lives, obliterated entire cities, and rendered millions of people homeless. Regrettably, thousands of individuals remain missing, and due to the extensive clearance of debris in all ten affected cities, the true extent of the death toll may never be accurately determined.

Regrettably, the gravity of this historic disaster has been overshadowed by the recent presidential election in May. Both social and mass media platforms seem to have shifted their attention away from the disaster zone. Nevertheless, the challenges continue to mount for the millions of individuals compelled to reside in tents, as well as the fortunate minority residing in container houses. Over time, these individuals have also begun to face psychological hardships stemming from the trauma of the disaster and prolonged exposure to such living conditions.

As the İzmir Protestan Kilisesi, we have been actively engaged in prioritizing assistance to Christian victims of the disaster, with the wider population of victims receiving secondary consideration. We have diligently sought to identify the most effective ways to utilize the donations we have received. Consequently, it has taken some time to compile this third update. However, we are delighted to inform you that the grace of the Lord has presented us with valuable opportunities to make a meaningful impact in the disaster zone and extend aid to our brothers and sisters.

We have dispatched two groups to address urgent needs. The third group, comprising two individuals from our church, arrived in April and successfully addressed numerous critical requirements while also delivering various secondary supplies. Their exceptional work in procuring and distributing essential provisions garnered tremendous praise. Encouraged by their achievements, we subsequently dispatched a fourth team consisting of three women from our church to the disaster zone in June. Their primary focus was to cater to the urgent needs of the Christian community and aid groups who have been diligently serving all individuals affected by the disaster. The fourth group promptly responded to all requests received from local Christians and Christian groups in Antakya.

Pictures from the works of the third group: Özgün and Tuğrul



Pictures from the works of the fourth group: Seçil, Deniz and Biceml



We were informed about a Christian family that lost their home and lacked the necessary funds to secure an apartment. In response, we reached out to the family and covered their rent for a period of six months. The family expressed immense gratitude for the support extended by a church they were previously unfamiliar with. We, too, were gratified to have had the opportunity to demonstrate care and compassion to this Christian family whom we had not yet met.

Saving the most exhilarating news regarding our efforts to assist the disaster victims for the closing remarks, we must acknowledge that our plans to procure container houses had to be cancelled due to the prevailing chaos in the disaster zone. Even the government, in late May, struggled to establish the first container house villages. In retrospect, we recognize the providence guiding our decision-making process. However, our earnest pursuit of a project capable of significantly improving the lives of numerous victims ultimately bore fruit: the acquisition of water purifiers.

These substantial systems are designed to provide clean, potable water to approximately 2,500-3,000 individuals each day. Clean water remains the most pressing need in the area, and this need will persist until the infrastructure is rebuilt. Alarming reports have already surfaced regarding cases of cholera, typhoid, and dysentery, with some asserting an imminent epidemic within the disaster zone. Due to conflicting reports disseminated by the government, we are unable to ascertain the precise situation on the ground. Nevertheless, the conditions there remain highly precarious. We have recently procured a water purification system for a camp accommodating 2,500 individuals, which has been operational since last week. This system surpasses the standard "cleaning" of water by also filtering out hazardous chemicals often neglected by more rudimentary systems.

While we could elaborate further on the details of this system, it is evident that clean water remains the most critical necessity, and we possess the means to address this problem across several camps. We are currently engaged in discussions with the same company to acquire four large-scale purification systems for four separate tent camps. Two of these camps each house 5,000 individuals, while the other two accommodate 2,500 each. Therefore, if the Lord permits, we anticipate procuring water purifiers this month, capable of providing clean water to a total of 17,500 individuals on a daily basis.



Christian Family that we helped with the rent

Pictures from the first water Purifier

The camp where the first water purifier was donated. Because of its size, it is built in a blue container.



Once again, we extend our deepest gratitude for your unwavering support and prayers. We kindly request that you continue to remember us and the people of southeast Turkey in your prayers. Specifically, we humbly implore you to pray for mercy and healing for all those affected by the disaster, for the guidance of wise and just leaders spearheading the recovery efforts, and for the illuminating power of the gospel to instill hope and dispel darkness among those suffering, and for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those enduring hardship.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. We express our profound appreciation once again for your generosity and compassion.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Fikret Böcek and Rev. Çağdaş Coşkun