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Greece Being Devastated by Wildfires

Since early July Greece has been burning. Very little of what's been happening here has been reported in the UK news, so it's not surprising that many are unaware of the summer from hell we are having.

During the first five days of the past week alone, 355 wildfires broke out. With winds of 7-8 Beaufort blowing



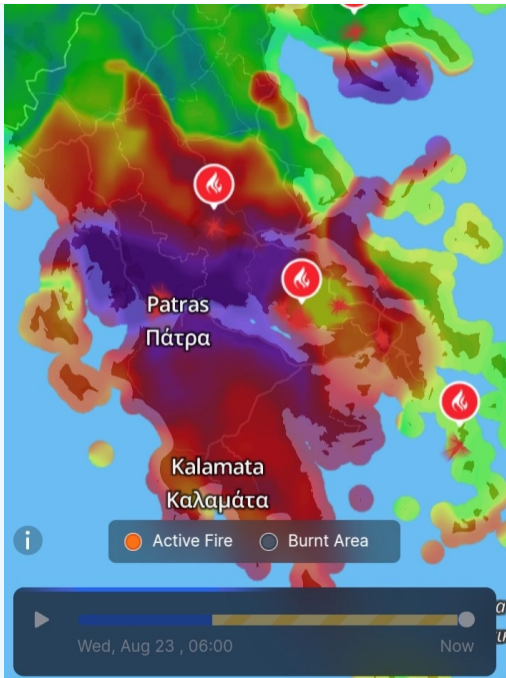
Just one of the many fires burning in Greece this week

much of the time, the fires are spreading fast and rapidly becoming out of control. New fires are still starting all over the place. Massive fires have incinerated everything in their path. The fire service is fighting hard day and night, but with gale-force winds blowing, it has often felt hopeless.

"What is happening specifically this summer, even in relation to other very difficult summers, has no precedent" (Pavlos Marinakis, government spokesperson)

We at ICC have noticed a big change this year. We've heard some suggestions that the media is exaggerating or scare-mongering, regarding extreme weather and wildfires. But we are witnessing first-hand the reality here and it's scary!

Greece has always had wildfires and heatwaves in the summer, but this year it has been noticeably and significantly worse.



map of smoke covering most of the Greek mainland two days ago (the fires marked are just some of the big ones burning, many more besides these are also burning!). Darker colour means worse air quality from smoke

was ok. He told us it's caught fire six times already, so they've given up. It's devastating.

Three days ago, those of us in Goshen were woken at around 4 am by thick smoke in the air - the kind of air that is suffocating. We couldn't breathe. Thankfully this time, the smoke was not from a nearby fire but from fires 100 miles away.

This isn't just the case in Goshen. Vast areas of Greece have been suffocating from the smoke spreading from all the huge fires burning across the country, causing respiratory problems for people.

Alexandropolis, Evia, Viotia, Aspropyrgos, Parnitha, Corinth, Crete, Maronia, Kavala, Evros, Rhodopi, Fili, Acharnes, Achaia... and many more places have been burning (and still are now).

One of the ICC team is from a village in Evia. We asked him if his village



Fires burn behind the Acropolis in Athens (fire is still burning today)

In the past two days, a massive fire has been raging in the mountains surrounding Athens. The flock in Athens has been struggling with smoke and ash that has been affecting the city.

Our safe houses are all in central Athens, so

everyone at ICC is safe, but they are scared by the scale of what's happening.



huge wildfire burning in the mountains that surround Athens

"I think the time of the apocalypse has arrived. Terrible and bad times. There are fires everywhere. In the street is full of soot. I left my window open last night, today there is ash everywhere inside my room. It is a very bad and scary situation. May God protect us all."



A woman prays as she watches her house burn.

Another one of our families is asking for prayer for their young son. He is asthmatic and struggling with the smoke. They have asked you all to pray for "Saied". (-name changed to protect identity)

We've been making sure everyone gets FFP2 masks to use if they have to go outside.

Regardless of one's personal views of climate change, what we are experiencing here in Greece this year is devastating. Some fires have been started by arson or negligence, but the extreme heat we are experiencing has dried everything, making it extremely easy to ignite and spread, especially when fuelled by strong winds.

Tragically, 18 migrants were found burned to death in the fires near the Turkish border. We suspect more may also have lost their lives as it's a hotspot for migrants trying to enter Europe.

Greeks have also lost their lives, as well as vast areas of land used for olive production. Homes and livelihoods are being lost all over Greece.



Just some of the big fires that have been burning across the country this week. Many are still out of control. There have been many more than shown here - these are just some of the big ones.

Wildfires almost reached Goshen

In our last newsletter, we asked for prayer cover particularly against the threat of deadly wildfires. Just a week later, a big fire broke out very close to Goshen. It burned out of control, spreading fast with the strong winds in the area.



We sent out several urgent prayer requests, and are so grateful to all of you who prayed so faithfully during that week!

Goshen just on the other side of this smoke

Thousands of acres of olive groves near Goshen were incinerated, and firefighters battled for several days and nights to get the flames under control. Several times, the areas that were extinguished re-ignited due to strong winds and continued high temperatures. Five helicopters dropping water continuously were eventually able to get the fire out.

It was a long and scary week, but glory to God, the flames did not reach Goshen and we were unharmed.



fires starting very close to Goshen

We need to increase our wildfire resilience

This experience has caused us to re-assess our wildfire resilience for Goshen. The retreat facility is far from the nearest town, so if a fire does reach us, help may not arrive in time. We need to increase our defences.

We have found a water-soluble fire retardant, that can be sprayed on trees, vegetation, buildings, tents etc. if fire is approaching, to reduce their chance of igniting. It can also be used for creating firebreaks and for extinguishing.

We need some more water tanks, ready and in place specifically for mixing and storing the retardant, along with a couple of petrol pumps/sprayers and hoses. We also need to build a more fireproof storage shed for our gas bottles and petrol supply (gas for cooking, petrol for agricultural machinery/equipment).

Please pray that we are able to raise the funds to put these in place!

This is what we need to protect the camping areas and the communal buildings:

2 x 600 Litre water tanks (£200 each)
1 x 1200 Litre water tank (£300)
2 x backpack sprayers for spraying retardant (£100 each)
1 x sprayer pump, hose and reel (£350)
1 x water pump (£300)
several fire beaters (£60 each)
fire retardant (£250)
Enclosed stone fuel storage shed (approx. £1000)

Keeping our Eyes on Jesus

This week, in one of our bible classes, we were looking at the story of Jesus walking on water. The disciples were exhausted, battling the stormy seas of Galilee when, during the fourth watch of the night (between 3am and 6am), Jesus walked towards them on the water, and Peter stepped out in faith to meet Him.



All the time Peter had his eyes on Jesus, he was safe walking on the water. The moment he took his eyes off Jesus, and instead looked at the storm around him and considered his situation, he began to sink. It was an apt lesson for the flocks all seeing the increasing storms around them, and a good reminder for us all. No matter how bad the storm gets... no matter how intensely the fires rage... if we keep our eyes fixed on our king, we will not sink.

May we all keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, and not become overwhelmed by the terrible things happening around us. If you're facing a storm today, or if you're feeling overwhelmed by all the bad stuff happening in the world right now, fix your eyes on Jesus. He won't let you sink and drown.

New Faces at the

House of Faith

We've seen a few new faces at the House of Faith this month, with some arrivals from one of the refugee camps outside Athens, as well as others facing various difficulties as they flee persecution.

It's such a blessing to see existing members of the House of Faith community welcome new faces and help them to feel part of the family. The House of Faith centre is a real oasis for our beneficiaries, with opportunities for fellowship around meals, prayer times together, bible classes as well as practical help and pastoral support with the various situations they face.



"You have been a huge part of our lives this past year. Not only are you providing us with shelter and a safe environment but you don't just see us as numbers, like other organisations do - you build a loving and caring community for us and help us however you can. Thank you for helping us to become better disciples of Christ and for supporting us as we try to stand on our own feet again."

Thank you to all of you who continue to stand with us and enable these precious families to be part of ICC.

Safe House Repair - Update and Prayer Request

There are still delays on the work of our damaged safe house, so please pray.

Another issue was discovered during the repair work, which has been caused by a problem in the communal area of the building. That has to be resolved before the repairs can continue, so we've hit another obstacle, delaying progress! Arrgh!

It's good the issue has come to light while work is already being done, as it means it will be dealt with, but it's incredibly frustrating to have one of the safe houses out of action! Please pray for these issues to be resolved quickly so that work can continue, and so we can use it again.

**Family fleeing
persecution
again - update**

We shared about this



precious family in Kabul who had to flee persecutors again last month. Thank you to all who have been praying.

The family have managed to move to a new hiding place, but the father has had to hide in a village for a while, before he can join the rest of

his family. He had to flee urgently before the family could move, and it hasn't been safe yet for him to travel to join them. Please continue to pray for them. Pray that our dear brother will be able to get back to his family safely, and that the family will be hidden from their enemies.

"Oh my God, there is no way of salvation except for you, dear Christ, Oh Holy One, my God who I trust, please keep us safe from our enemies. We trust in you."

Pray for their continued strength and peace. They are so bold and trusting our King fervently for their protection.

Current ICC Needs

We have a few needs this month.

Please continue to pray for:

- protection and provision for the flocks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Athens;
- provision for the wildfire resilience needs shared above;
- funds to cover our annual Greek accountancy fees, due next month (2,400 Euros);
- protection from the intense heat, and from wildfires, particularly in Goshen.
- speedy progress on our safe house repair work
- wisdom, discernment and strength for the ICC team

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T H A N K Y O U

Your love, encouragement and support is so appreciated by everyone at ICC - both near and far. Thank you for not getting tired of standing beside us and walking alongside your brothers and sisters in need. Thank you for faithfully covering us in prayer, sending encouragement and financial support. You are making a difference!

Thank you from all of us!

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