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Fate Will Find a Way

February Newsletter #1

Four hours before the ceasefire, a cluster bomb hit the hill adjacent to the playground at the AGAPE center in Berdzor, breaking all the windows & doors of the Guesthouse, Christian Education Center, and the Staff House, causing significant damage to the AGAPE Center's property.

According to the tripartite declaration, the Kashatagh region was to pass under the Azeri control by December 1st, leaving only a **3-mile-corridor** along the highway controlled by peacekeepers to connect Goris with Stepanakert. The next day, when the declaration was signed, the staff of Project AGAPE started removing everything from the four buildings of AGAPE Center, including the humanitarian aid, which was still sitting at the AGAPE warehouse due to the slow distribution process regarding the COVID-19 restrictions. Thanks to the incredible network of connections gained in 27 years, Project AGAPE was able to find a big warehouse in Goris – the last big town in Armenia close to the border of Artsakh – a warehouse big enough to fit all the inventory from the AGAPE Center **4 buildings** and the humanitarian aid from the **warehouse**.



The Children's Home children were removed from the building to a safe place right after the war started on September 27th. They were moved to the SOS Children's Village in the Kotayk region of Armenia, where they stay at present. Here is the [link](#) to the orphanage:

<https://www.sos-kd.am/en/programs/KotaykSOS.html>

Starting from November 10th up to the last day of the month while working in Berdzor with no electricity and water (the PA staff had to complete the daily work by 6:00 or 7:00 pm before it got completely dark, then go and stay in Goris) the status of Berdzor changed a dozen times: it's *staying* under Armenian control, it's *not staying* under Armenian control, etc., and eventually, the last thing was – **no one** will live in Berdzor because the peacekeepers cannot guarantee any Armenian's safety. While the PA staff was working there, a Lebanese Armenian woman and man who had moved to Artsakh right after the Beirut blast were kidnapped in Berdzor by Azeris and are missing until today...

One of the points on the tripartite declaration states about a new corridor to connect Artsakh with Armenia. Still, it's unclear whether it will be a new corridor leaving Berdzor out or a new road between Berdzor and Stepanakert...

The assessment through phone calls to over 1,500 beneficiary families showed that almost 12,000 displaced people from the Kashatagh region are scattered all over Armenia, mostly in the areas between Goris and Yerevan and some families beyond – to the northern and southern parts of Armenia. This **assessment** helped Project AGAPE decide where the next "base" to start humanitarian aid and community development projects would be located.



Vayk - a town and the center of the urban community in Vayots Dzor Province in the south of Armenia, which is also right in the middle of the country's northern & southern regions, turned to be the optimal place. Several communities around Vayk had been looked into as well. There is one good option that Project AGAPE staff has found: if this building is rented, the first floor will serve as a warehouse area, the second floor will be as a lodging place for the AGAPE staff and the visiting teams, and the big attic area may serve as an equipment storage place. So, Project AGAPE is moving forward with the new AGAPE center in Vayk.



The NCC & WNCC members who have visited Armenia and Artsakh may remember the new church (the one built in the year 2001 and dedicated to the 1,700 anniversary of Christianity in Armenia) at the right side of the road half-way to Artsakh from Yerevan, where we used to stop, the new Project AGAPE hub will be in the same town not far from the church if the rental of the house mentioned above becomes a reality. There will be significant renovations needed on this facility before teams could stay there. The Board of Directors is going to try and raise funds for that purpose. The warehouse in Goris will be kept as long as needed until all the humanitarian aid is delivered and the inventory of the buildings is moved to the new office of Project AGAPE.

Along with this, Project AGAPE seeks ways to partner with other charitable organizations; one of them is the previous affiliate of UMCOR, which is now an independent charity. The phone call with the Managing Director Seda Papoyan of another project - Girls in Tech Armenia - which now has also a project called Tech4ArtsakhKids opened a window to another possible partnership (one of the BOD members – Jane Leechford's contact on LinkedIn), as Project AGAPE works with 1500 families of Kashatagh which will help to include the displaced kids in this project. Seda Papoyan said that they had heard about Project AGAPE a lot, and she was happy about this possible cooperation.

Regardless of the difficult working conditions, Project AGAPE staff continues to meet the immediate needs of displaced families, helping as much as possible, providing them with the first necessity items. The most significant urgent need at present is housing because over 40,000 people have lost their homes; there is also a need for warm blankets, bedding, household supplies/kitchen utensils, warm clothing/shoes, hygiene supplies & school supplies.

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