

 **OpenDoors**

TACKLE PERSECUTION

AT THE 2022 WORLD CUP 



2022 WORLD CUP PRAYER DIARY

The last men's football World Cup – held in 2018 in Russia – was watched by some 3.5 billion people worldwide. That's more than half the world's population. It's one of the world's most popular sports tournaments – even attracting those not particularly interested in football!

This means the tournament offers a precious opportunity to draw attention to the seven countries involved which are also on the World Watch List, including host nation Qatar. Being a Christian in these countries can come at a huge cost, and watching their teams play over the next few weeks can be a prompt to pray for them. This prayer diary aims to equip you to do this.

The diary covers the group stage of the tournament, when on each day at least one of the seven countries will be playing.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support – they really do make an enormous difference to our brothers and sisters following Jesus no matter the cost.

IRAN (9)

POPULATION: 84.3 million / 800,000 Christians (0.9%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia

SAUDI ARABIA (11)

POPULATION: 35.3 million / 1.2 million Christians (3.4%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression, Clan oppression

QATAR (18)

POPULATION: 2.8 million / 372,000 Christians (13.1%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression, Clan oppression

MOROCCO (27)

POPULATION: 37.5 million / 31,400 Christians (0.9%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression

TUNISIA (35)

POPULATION: 12 million / 22,800 Christians (0.9%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression

MEXICO (43)

POPULATION: 135.4 million / 129.6 million Christians (95.7%)

MAIN THREATS: Organised crime and corruption

CAMEROON (44)

POPULATION: 26.6 million / 16.4 million Christians (62%)

MAIN THREATS: Islamic oppression, Dictatorial paranoia

SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER

QATAR



ECUADOR

GROUP A

MEET A church leader in Qatar

"We already see the move of the Holy Spirit in Qatar," says the leader of a church for expats and migrant workers. "God is visiting people in their dreams. God is doing miracles. God is doing healings among the Qatari people."

"I believe that we have a golden opportunity during the World Cup. I hope that the name of the Lord will be magnified during the event."

PLEASE PRAY

"Pray that fear will vanish, and that people will speak openly," the leader requests. "We believe that miracles will happen."



WORDS OF PEACE

A new suite of Christmas resources featuring letters from children of the persecuted church is available for use at your festive services.

Find out more at opendoorsuk.org/christmas

MONDAY 21 NOVEMBER

ENGLAND



IRAN

GROUP B

MEET Ali and Zahra

For years Ali* was a drug addict, but one night he encountered Jesus in a dream – and it changed everything. He became a Christian, as did his wife, Zahra*.

But it came at a cost. They were rejected by family and friends, lost their jobs, and faced intense interrogation after being arrested for involvement in a house church. The couple and their children now live in Turkey.

“When we were in solitary confinement, the only thing that strengthened us was prayer; nothing else would work,” Ali says.

PLEASE PRAY

That the Holy Spirit will surround those in prison in Iran with His peace and protection, and that they will be used in amazing ways to reach other prisoners with the love of Jesus.



TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER

DENMARK



TUNISIA

GROUP D

DID YOU KNOW?

The risks involved in converting from Islam to Christianity in Tunisia are huge. Women can face forced marriage and house arrest, among other problems, while the dangers facing men include physical attack, death threats and social isolation.

PLEASE PRAY

That Christians at risk of persecution in Tunisia will be guarded from harm, strengthened in faith and empowered in witness.

WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER

MOROCCO



CROATIA

GROUP F

MEET Nadeen

Those in Morocco who convert to Christianity from a Muslim background must keep their faith a secret. This includes Nadeen*. When she became a Christian, she couldn't help but tell her family – but they were furious. Her father beat her. Nadeen must pretend that she's still a Muslim, despite loving Jesus.

“Thank God, I found a way to meet with some other Christians on another day in the week. We organise it in a way that my family doesn't get suspicious,” says Nadeen. If discovered, the consequences are unthinkable. “If my father found out, he'd kill me.” And she means it literally.

PLEASE PRAY

That Christians in Morocco, like Nadeen, who must keep their faith secret, will be equipped with all they need to flourish in their faith and even share it with others.

THURSDAY 24 NOVEMBER

SWITZERLAND



CAMEROON

GROUP G

DID YOU KNOW?

The ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon – a civil war that's been fought since 2017 – has preoccupied the government, resulting in less security in the north where Boko Haram is active. This is making Christians in the region more vulnerable to attack.

PLEASE PRAY

That the government in Cameroon will be stirred and equipped to counter the growing threat of Islamic militancy in the country.

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER

WALES



IRAN

GROUP B

DID YOU KNOW?

Teaching the Bible or telling others about Christianity could result in prosecution in Iran, as could the claim that you can communicate with Jesus. That's under changes to Iran's penal code introduced in 2021.

PLEASE PRAY

That Christians in Iran will be given wisdom, discernment and boldness as they seek to share their faith with others.



SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER

POLAND



SAUDI ARABIA

GROUP C

MEET Adam

After leaving Islam to give his life to Jesus, Adam* faced multiple false charges for Christian activities and helping his sister-in-law, also a believer, to flee the country because of persecution. He even spent time in prison.

In Saudi Arabia, leaving Islam carries the death penalty. Although courts have not carried this out in recent years, it highlights the dangers involved in leaving Islam to follow Jesus.

Adam and his family eventually fled to safety in another country. "The suffering and the difficult and tragic experiences are nothing compared to the reward that we will receive," Adam said at the time. "I try to realise that our suffering will lead to others being blessed in their faith and trust in God."

PLEASE PRAY

That Adam, his wife and two sons will recover from the trauma, and that Adam will find work to support his family.

Image used for illustrative purposes



SUNDAY 27 NOVEMBER

BELGIUM



MOROCCO

GROUP F

DID YOU KNOW?

Morocco's penal code criminalises 'shaking the faith of a Muslim'. This means Christians must be very careful when talking about Jesus, as it could lead to arrest and prosecution.

PLEASE PRAY

That opportunities will emerge for believers to safely share the gospel with others, and ask the Holy Spirit to give them the right words to say.

MONDAY 28 NOVEMBER

CAMEROON



SERBIA

GROUP G

MEET Fadi

The Boko Haram insurgency in Cameroon has forced Fadi* from village to village. In 2015, her sister was kidnapped. Two weeks later, her mother died from hypertension.

Fadi struggles with nightmares and often feels alone, but the prayers and practical help of Open Doors supporters are a great solace to her. Despite everything, her faith in Jesus remains strong.

"I need God with me in every situation, to display His wonderful power in my life," says Fadi.

PLEASE PRAY

That God will meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of all those affected by persecution in Cameroon.



TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER

NETHERLANDS



QATAR

GROUP A

DID YOU KNOW?

Qatari Christians – who are very small in number – are not allowed to have their own church buildings. However, this is allowed for foreigners, although space is limited and there are some restrictions, including a ban on Qataris visiting.

PLEASE PRAY

That God will use the World Cup to prompt the authorities to grant greater religious freedom to Qataris.

WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER

SAUDI ARABIA



MEXICO

GROUP C

MEET Adolfina

When Adolfina* and Imeldo* started a church in their small indigenous community, opposition surfaced. Christian worship is considered a betrayal by such communities in Mexico who highly value their ancestral traditions.

“No, I will not give up my Christ,” said Imeldo when the community forbade church services. “Do what you want – I won’t give up.” Imeldo was locked up and the church building destroyed.

Sadly, Imeldo later died from Covid-19. Adolfina is still supported by Open Doors partners. “I thank the brothers and sisters who support all the Christians who are suffering,” she says.

PLEASE PRAY

For safety, boldness and strength for Christians in Mexico who are vulnerable to hostility from indigenous groups and criminal gangs.



WORLD CUP FUNDRAISING IDEAS

One of the great things about the World Cup is the way it brings people together, so why not use this as an opportunity to raise money for our persecuted family?

You could host a showing of England v Iran (21 November) or Wales v Iran (25 November) at your church and ask people to bring dishes from countries playing at the World Cup. Invite donations and use half-time to talk about the persecution facing Christians in Iran and elsewhere across the world.

Or how about taking on a sponsored football activity, such as a seven-hour football match (one hour for each country at the World Cup which is on the World Watch List) involving family, friends and people from your church?

Get fundraising resources and tips at opendoorsuk.org/fundraise



THURSDAY 1 DECEMBER

CANADA



MOROCCO

GROUP F

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2021, 11 Christians in Morocco were detained, and 34 physically or mentally abused. This includes one man who was beaten by his family after they found a Bible in his room.

PLEASE PRAY

That God will heal all those who've suffered in Morocco because of their love for Jesus, and that God will use their experiences to draw them and others nearer to Jesus.

FRIDAY 2 DECEMBER

CAMEROON



BRAZIL

GROUP G

MEET **Baldina**

Baldina's life in Cameroon has been devastated by Boko Haram. One of her sons was killed by the militant group, and the other fled to a faraway town for fear of them.

For most of her life, Baldina – who is elderly and has a husband who's frail – had been a nominal Christian. After her son's death, she went to church in search of peace.

"When I hear the message and listen to the songs, I am comforted," Baldina shares. "I thank God for everything. He is helping me to be strong today."

PLEASE PRAY

That Jesus will reveal Himself to Boko Haram fighters in sub-Saharan Africa through dreams and visions, and the witness of the church, and that they will turn and follow Him.



THE BLESSING OF FOOTBALL

It was once famously said that “Football is the most important of the least important things in life.” It’s a quote that could well apply to many children affected by persecution – including Apo from Syria, whose story you might recall.

In 2013, when he was just a year old, Apo’s father was kidnapped for his faith. He has not been seen since. For three years, Apo was unable to speak, and even when he could, anxiety remained. Thanks to a Centre of Hope, which is funded by Open Doors supporters like you, he and his mother, Jina, are being provided with practical and spiritual support.

It’s where Apo – now ten years old – plays football with his friends. Such is the enjoyment it brings him, that Jina beams with joy as she watches him play. At school, Apo’s favourite part is playing sports.

Apo is very excited about the World Cup – and one player in particular.

“I love Kylian Mbappé of the French team and of Paris Saint-Germain,” he says.

PLEASE PRAY

That more opportunities will emerge for persecuted children, like Apo, to experience the joys of playing their favourite sports.

*Names changed for security reasons



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