

# Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | January/February 2023



**"Be on your guard;  
stand firm in the  
faith; be courageous;  
be strong."**

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13

# JANUARY

## | North Korea

### **Sunday 1 January**

Christianity is seen as a particular threat to the ideology and governance of North Korea's dictatorial regime. Christians are viewed as enemies of the state and of society. Pray that the country will be liberated from oppressive leadership and that God's people will be free to worship Him in freedom.

### **Monday 2 January**

If their faith is discovered, Christians are often sent to labour camps, where conditions are appalling. Pray that God will pour His supernatural peace and strength into believers who are in detention, as well as their families. Pray for an end to this brutal subversion of their human rights.



### **Tuesday 3 January**

Given the hostility towards Christianity in North Korea, the number of believers is few. But their love for Jesus is strong. Pray that the seed of faith sowed into their hearts will bear much fruit across North Korea.

### **Wednesday 4 January**

Open Doors fieldworkers like Rebecca\* (see Magazine p8)

give support to women who have been trafficked into China and sold into marriage with Chinese men. They share the love of Jesus and run Bible study groups for them. More female workers are needed for this ministry. Ask God to provide the right people.

### **Thursday 5 January**

Praise God that Sook-ja\* has been rescued from trafficking and is being helped by Open Doors fieldworkers. She regularly attends a Bible study group and is learning about being a disciple of Jesus. Pray that her faith will continue to bring her joy, healing and hope.

### **Friday 6 January**

Through networks in China, Open Doors facilitates secret deliveries of food, medicine, clothes and Christian materials to North Korean believers. Ask God to guide and protect those involved in this distribution.

### **Saturday 7 January**

Secret believers depend on support from Open Doors' underground network. Sometimes it is a simple hot meal, but in their hardship, this means a lot to them. Pray that believers will continue to be encouraged in faith and that God will provide all their needs.

### **Sunday 8 January**

"Thanks to your support, my family and my fellow Christians were able to taste fresh white rice on the national holiday, a rare opportunity of the year," says a secret believer. Praise God that, despite obstacles, the global church can support our North Korean family in practical ways.

## | Afghanistan

### **Monday 9 January**

Sitara\* (BELOW) from Afghanistan fled to a country in Central Asia, where she became a Christian. But now she is afraid that she will be sent back to Afghanistan. "If you're a Christian, there's no life in Afghanistan for you," she says. Pray that she and other refugee secret believers will not be forced to return.



### **Tuesday 10 January**

Access to medical aid and education has

been greatly diminished for many people in Afghanistan – especially women and girls. "I would ask [people] to pray for the simplest of things... education, work and a peaceful life," Sitara says. Pray that God will restore these vital services.

### **Wednesday 11 January**

Shafika\* is part of a secret house group of Afghan believers living in Central Asia. But they are at risk of being exposed and persecuted by other Afghan refugees who want to make life difficult for them. Pray for Shafika and her house group, that their witness will win over other Afghan refugees for Christ.

### **Thursday 12 January**

Jesus is meeting with Afghans in dreams and visions! Please pray for security for all believers and seekers, that God will direct them to a place of nurture and discipleship. Pray also for Open Doors

secret teams as they connect with and provide fellowship and support for Afghan believers in Central Asia.

### **Friday 13 January**

Ask God to 'pour out [His] Spirit on all people' (Joel 2:28) in Afghanistan so that the church will thrive and grow even in the midst of persecution. Ask God to give His people visions of hope for the country that they can pray into.

### **Saturday 14 January**

Despite promising a more moderate rule, the Taliban have been clamping down harshly on freedoms in the country. Abdulla\*, an Afghan refugee now living in Central Asia, says, "Please continue to pray; not only for us, but also for the Taliban. Of course, the Taliban are our enemies, but I ask you to pray for their salvation."

### **Sunday 15 January**

In November 2022, Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada re-established Sharia (Islamic law) in the country, which includes punishments such as public amputations and stoning for certain crimes. Pray that judges and courts will refuse to implement such harsh punishments, and that the Taliban will revoke this decision.

### **Monday 16 January**

Praise God for the work of Open Doors partners, who are continuing to provide practical support and spiritual care to Afghan refugees in neighbouring countries. Pray that God will protect, strengthen and sustain them in their ministry.

\*Names changed for security reasons

# Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



## “Thank you to those who care about us”

### YOU ARE HELPING ESTHER TO STAND STRONG

**More than a year after her husband was murdered by Islamic militants, Esther from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is standing strong, helped by your prayers and support.**

“I felt deep pain that one cannot bear,” said Esther after Pastor Isaac’s body was discovered hanging from a tree in North Kivu province. He was aged 33. Local Christians suspect he was targeted because of his evangelistic activities.

At the time, Open Doors local partners visited Esther and her three children, to provide comfort, food, clothing and money for other needs.

The team recently made a return visit. Esther is doing well physically, and with the financial support of family and Open Doors, she’s been able to build a small house on her in-laws’ compound. The money she was given has also enabled her to start her own business selling snacks.

“We continue to thank very much all those who care about us,” Esther says.

“I need the continued support of my brothers and sisters in the faith, because I know that with their support, I can stand back on my feet and continue to be strong despite the circumstance,” she adds. “I also pray that God will grant me the courage and strength to continue caring for my children, for their school, health and daily needs.”

### **“Press on without getting discouraged.”**

Emotionally and spiritually, Esther still needs your prayers as she continues to come to terms with her terrible loss.

“I know I am weak in my spiritual life because I have difficulty reading the Bible, difficulty praying,” she says. “But despite all the ups and downs of life, there is one passage that always comes back to me and strengthens me. It is Romans 8:39: ‘Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.’ “I strongly

need prayers so that God will give me back the strength to continue serving Him.

“My message to the brothers and sisters, who help us without even knowing us, is that they should press on without getting discouraged.”

Your help has inspired Esther to come alongside others who are going through hard times. “I think that through what you are doing for me, I will also help my brothers and sisters in their difficult time,” she says. “Thank you for the great lesson you have enabled me to learn.”

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God will continue to heal Esther and her three children
- That the Holy Spirit will strengthen and encourage Esther as she brings up her children
- That her business will flourish and be an avenue to share the love of Jesus.



Open Doors local partners (LEFT) deliver aid to Esther and her children (ABOVE)

## WORLD WATCH LIST

### **Tuesday 17 January**

Pray for Open Doors staff worldwide preparing to launch the World Watch List 2023 tomorrow. Pray that the launch of the new list in the media and on websites and social media channels will catch the attention of many people who aren't yet aware of the extent and severity of the persecution of Christians globally.

### **Wednesday 18 January**

As the World Watch List is launched in parliament today, pray that many MPs will attend the event, and will be compelled by what they hear to use their power and influence to protect the rights of persecuted Christians around the world.

### **Thursday 19 January**

#### **– North Korea**

To express gratitude for winter relief aid she received, Sa-Myung\* sent an envelope to Open Doors fieldworkers returning a tenth of what she was given. She is dependent on this support to survive, so this effectively meant risking a tenth of her life. Praise God for her remarkable faith!

### **Friday 20 January – Somalia**

Violent extremism is on the rise in Somalia, with the insurgent group al-Shabaab repeatedly expressing its desire to eradicate Christians from the country. Pray that Christians will be surrounded by God's peace and protection.

### **Saturday 21 January – Yemen**

It is extremely dangerous to be a Christian in Yemen, due

to the country's strict Islamic laws and the presence of militant Islamic groups. Yemini converts are at great risk of being killed, forcing many to keep their faith hidden. Ask God to pour healing and hope into Christians affected by persecution.

### **Sunday 22 January**

#### **– Eritrea**

"What makes us happy is that the gospel is spreading," says Pastor Gideon\*. "Now more than ever before. People, especially young people, are coming to Christ. Persecution has not stopped the church." Praise God for this and pray that Christians will continue to stand strong amid opposition.

### **Monday 23 January**

#### **– Libya**

The very few believers in Libya are greatly at risk of extreme persecution. This includes Moha\*, who is facing hostility from his wife. Pray that Moha will have grace and wisdom to show God's love to his wife, and ask the Holy Spirit to draw her to Jesus.

### **Tuesday 24 January**

#### **– Nigeria**

Christians continue to be attacked indiscriminately and brutally in northern Nigeria, and the violence is now spreading to the south. Pray for a decisive end to the influence and threat of militant and armed groups, and ask the Lord to reveal Himself to key figures in these groups.

### **Wednesday 25 January**

#### **– Pakistan**

Although there were no major attacks against churches

in Pakistan last year, there are almost constant attacks against individual believers. Many do not feel safe to worship freely. Pray that those affected by persecution will experience the 'God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles' (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

### **Thursday 26 January – Iran**

Last year, nationwide protests broke out following the death of Mahsa Amini after she was arrested for 'improper' wearing of the hijab. Most house church members are women, and recent unrest demonstrates how those detained for their faith are in considerable danger, especially since there is little legal protection for women. Pray that the protests will bring positive change.

### **Friday 27 January**

#### **– Afghanistan**

The Taliban's takeover of power in August 2021 has driven many Christians from the country. Some have stayed but have been forced further underground. Pray for the protection of secret believers and that God's close presence will bring peace, joy and hope to their hearts.

### **Saturday 28 January – Sudan**

In 2020, Sudan made steps towards religious freedom. However, this is under threat following a military coup in October 2021: last year, four Christians were charged under the apostasy law which had only recently been abolished. Ask the Lord to encourage His people in the face of renewed pressure.

### **Sunday 29 January – Africa**

Violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa has reached new heights. Political instability, economic hardship, climate change and the Russian invasion of Ukraine are providing fertile ground for the activities of jihadist groups, criminal gangs and mercenary soldiers, with Christians among those gravely affected and often targeted. Pray for peace and stability in the region.



ABOVE A Christian village in Cameroon is burned down by Islamic militants

### **Monday 30 January – Asia**

China's economic growth and ambitions, together with their control of those who do not conform to the Communist Party regime, has caught the eyes of international leaders around the world who are seeking to follow their model. This is a concerning trend for millions of Christians. Pray that attempts to replicate this model will not take root.

### **Tuesday 31 January**

#### **– Latin America**

Persecution is worsening in many parts of Latin America, and those who make a stand against criminality and government repression are especially at risk. Ask God to use the boldness of Christians to bring societal change and lead people to Jesus, and pray for their protection.

\*Names changed for security reasons



# Thank you for remembering Afghan refugees

Through local Open Doors partners, you are giving them hope



**Even before the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, people were already fleeing the country. Families and individuals left everything they knew – homes, friends, livelihoods – to find somewhere safe. But in many cases, they end up in desperate situations, struggling to survive.**

Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors partners have been providing Afghan refugees with practical and spiritual help – and most importantly, giving them hope. Miranda\*, a frontline partner of Open Doors, visited a small group of Afghan refugees in a neighbouring country. Despite the little they had, they offered Miranda tea and sweets as she listened to their stories.

"The Taliban wanted me to work for them," said one of the men, a doctor. "I refused, so they sent me a letter threatening my life." Another

man, a surgeon, said he had experienced the same thing.

"I sang Afghan songs for a living. My career is considered sinful by the Taliban. And I have three daughters. The Taliban will take them as wives, even without my approval," explained a third man.

These men are unable to get a permit to work and earn an income, but still have to pay to renew their refugee status every year. On top of that, they must pay rent for the place they are staying.

"Sometimes, we don't know what to spend our limited money on – food, rent, medicine or sometimes renewing our refugee card," said one mother.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING THERE**

As well as practical support, simply being there to provide emotional and spiritual support

is a hugely important element of Open Doors' work with refugees. Thanks to you, they can share their pain – and know that they are not left to struggle alone.

## **"You're the only group who came to help us."**

"The Taliban took my husband away when we were crossing the border," shared one woman. "My son, my three daughters and I made it here, but one of my daughters died from an illness."

"What hope do we have, for ourselves, for our children?" asked another lady, who worked as a schoolteacher back in Afghanistan. Pointing to a young girl sitting next to her, she said, "She finished her school education in Afghanistan. She is supposed to be in college. But now she

can't. She can't study. She can't work. What can she do?"

Through your continued prayers and gifts, Open Doors partners are helping these refugees with practical aid and continue to be present with them in their time of need. "You're the only group who came to help us," they said. "Please don't forget us!"

## **PLEASE PRAY**

- That God will comfort these refugees and give them hope for the future
- For new opportunities to continue with education and pursue livelihoods
- That Open Doors partners like Miranda will be strengthened to continue to support and stand alongside these refugees.

\*Name changed for security reasons and the image is representative

# FEBRUARY

## | North Korea

### Wednesday 1 February

North Korea's dictatorial regime, led by Kim Jong-un, is showing no signs of softening. But nothing is impossible for God. Pray for God's supernatural intervention in the leadership of the nation, and for an end to the continuous persecution of Christians and others in North Korea.

### Thursday 2 February

Despite being forbidden to meet for Christian activities, secret believers still courageously gather to encourage one another, pray and share fellowship. Pray that meetings will be protected from the prying eyes of the authorities.

### Friday 3 February

Last year, Open Doors received the terrible news that several dozen believers from an underground church were captured and executed. Pray that God's comfort will surround and strengthen their families, many of whom have been sent to political camps.

### Saturday 4 February

A UN Commission of Inquiry report recently concluded that human rights violations in North Korea make it a 'state without parallel' in the contemporary world. Pray for wisdom for the international community in engaging with North Korea and pray that the North Korean regime will soften its stance in allowing

itself to be helped and influenced by the wider world.

### Sunday 5 February

Lady Da Hyeon\* has been receiving extensive Bible training at an Open Doors safe house in China. It's equipping her to return to North Korea to share the gospel with family and friends. Pray for her protection and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of those she will minister to.

### Monday 6 February

Aaron\* is a fieldworker serving in the safe house ministry in China. He recently felt overwhelmed by the surveillance and obstacles they were experiencing. It highlights the risks Open Doors fieldworkers and their families can face. Pray that they will know that their 'labour in the Lord is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:58).

### Tuesday 7 February

Praise God that the radio ministry run by Open Doors local partners continues to encourage secret believers. Pray that the broadcasts will continue to reach believers and even non-believers without reprisal.

## | Afghanistan

### Wednesday 8 February

Pray for God's continued protection for secret believers hiding in Afghanistan. Hana\* is an Open Doors partner in the Gulf region. She says, "Afghanistan's Christians are on the move, trying their best to avoid detection... now there is no safety anywhere, for anyone."

### Thursday 9 February

"The banking system has collapsed, and inflation is at an all-time high," Hana says. "Family incomes have gone down; many of the faithful are having to share what little they have with each other." Thank God for the generosity of secret Afghan believers; please pray that the Lord will continue to provide everything they need.

### Friday 10 February

Pray for continued strength for believers who feel called by God to stay and serve Him in Afghanistan. "Even though there are only a handful of believers, He has been faithful to them," says Hana. "He continues to answer their prayers, give them the strength to endure suffering and call them to Him at the time of His choosing."

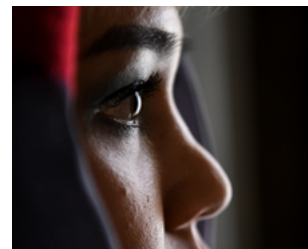
### Saturday 11 February

The Taliban refuses to acknowledge the existence of believers in the country. According to a Taliban spokesperson, "There are no Christians in Afghanistan. A Christian minority has never been known or registered here." Praise God that even the Taliban cannot stamp out Jesus' presence – pray that God's love will permeate the Afghan government.

### Sunday 12 February

Nilufar\* (ABOVE RIGHT) is an Afghan refugee now living in Central Asia. "The women now live as in prison," she says. "They can't breathe. If a woman goes out, she doesn't know what will happen with her in the next ten minutes. Will she

return home or not?" Please pray for increased freedom and safety for women and girls in Afghanistan.



ABOVE Nilufar, an Afghan refugee in Central Asia

### Monday 13 February

"The Taliban took my husband away when we were crossing the border," recalls one Afghan refugee now living in a neighbouring country. So many families have been torn apart since the Taliban rose to power. Pray that God will comfort them in their grief, and that they will be reunited with loved ones.

### Tuesday 14 February

The lack of medical help is particularly impacting Afghans living in rural areas, where pregnant women, the elderly and children are desperately in need of attention. Please pray that food, medicine and medical aid workers from other organisations will be able to safely reach these areas.

### Wednesday 15 February

It's 18 months to the day since Taliban fighters swept into Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, and took control of the country. Ask God to reveal Himself to the country's leaders in visions and dreams and bring an end to their tyrannical rule.

\*Names changed for security reasons



## CHRISTIANS IN ERITREA:

# “They can’t take Jesus away from us”

Your prayers are helping sustain our brothers and sisters in Eritrea

Eritrea is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian. But the threat of persecution is not enough to stop believers like Peter\* (PICTURED OPPOSITE) from making the choice to follow Jesus. In an extract from a letter to supporters like you, he shares what it’s like to be a Christian in Eritrea – and how the church ‘remains standing’ thanks to your continued prayers.

“To live for Christ is something I have consciously chosen to do. Every day I choose to participate in this walk knowing what trials await me. Therefore, when it comes to challenges, I look to Jesus who has faced far greater trials. They can’t take Him away from us; they can make our lives difficult, but they can’t take away the truth.”

## ARRESTED FOR MEETING TOGETHER

“Know this: you will be treated as second, third or even fourth-class citizens, and you will not necessarily find acceptance from your family – in their eyes you have betrayed them for choosing Christ.

“Your employer can dismiss you or exclude you whenever they please. If you point out wrongdoing because your faith asks this of you, your colleagues will avoid you.”

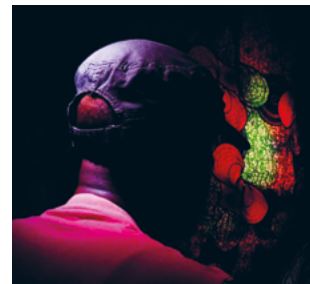
**“We remain standing because they continue to pray for us. God hears their and our prayers, He collects each and every one.”**

“When you leave your house to have fellowship, you must always consider the possibility of being arrested. If you do decide to go out, know that someone is always watching. Our minds are often consumed with worries and fear. Even though you may only be with two or three people – if they find you reading the Bible or praying, they will arrest you.”

## “WE KNOW JESUS THROUGH OUR SUFFERING”

“Yet there is a hope and a light that radiates from us. And some people can see this. They see in us things of Christ. They see our happiness and peace. Even when we are in suffering, we rejoice. But even if we have

nothing, we thank God. We want people everywhere in Eritrea to hear the gospel and, for this to happen, we need a door for the gospel.”



“Brothers and sisters are better acquainted with God’s Word. They studied the Word, and its teachings have become real to us. We had heard a lot about Jesus preached in church before, but now we know Him in person through our own sufferings.

“Think about it this way: ‘How would the persecution be if a brother and sister didn’t pray for us?’ We remain standing because they continue to pray for us. God hears their and our prayers, He collects each and every one.”

## PLEASE PRAY

- Praise God for Peter’s faith – pray that God will continue to strengthen him
- For imprisoned believers in Eritrea, that they will know God’s comforting presence
- That God will embolden the Eritrean church to keep sharing the gospel.

\*Name changed for security reasons



## | Africa

### Thursday 16 February

#### – Burkina Faso

In the midst of a deepening security crisis caused by last year's military coup, jihadist activity is expanding and Christians are increasingly being targeted and killed. Ask God to heal and comfort those severely traumatised and affected by jihadist attacks, and pray for wisdom for Open Doors partners strengthening the church with trauma care and relief aid.

### Friday 17 February – Central African Republic (CAR)

The ongoing conflict has displaced thousands of Christians and many live in camps for internally displaced people. Igna\* was forced to flee her home after a rebel group assaulted her and now lives in a camp. Pray for her healing and that God will protect her and her family from further harm.



### Saturday 18 February – Niger

As the influence of jihadist groups expands, pressure on believers from Muslim backgrounds is increasing. Give thanks that Sahoura (ABOVE), who was ostracised by her family, has received livelihood support and a microloan through Open

Doors. "When I converted, my relatives hated me so much," she says. "But now they see I make money with my own business, and that I use my money to help them out, they have stopped causing me problems."

### Sunday 19 February

#### – Mozambique

Attacks by Islamic extremists have displaced around 800,000 people in the northern Cabo Delgado Province, including many Christians. Pray for protection for Open Doors partners travelling to reach those in need with relief aid and spiritual support.

### Monday 20 February – Democratic Republic of Congo

Brutal attacks by the Islamic militant group the ADF have displaced thousands of Christians in the east of DRC. Give thanks that Open Doors partners are able to provide relief aid to 310 families in the town of Komanda. "We pray that God will bless you abundantly," says Suzana. "I pray that God will bless you because, thanks to you, we eat rice and beans."

### Tuesday 21 February

#### – Comoros

In Comoros, leaving Islam to follow Jesus is so risky that many believers choose to keep their faith secret. Pray that they will have access to fellowship and discipleship so they can grow in their faith.

## | Nigeria

### Wednesday 22 February

General elections are being held in Nigeria on 25 February



ABOVE Pray for Nigeria as the country prepares to hold elections

to elect the president and vice president and members of the Senate and House of Representatives. Pray that the elections will be fair and peaceful, and that the results will be clear.

### Thursday 23 February

Many are determined to spread disinformation in the run-up to the elections to bring about fear and division among the population. Ask the Holy Spirit to help people to discern what is true, and 'hold fast to what is good' (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

### Friday 24 February

Pray that church leaders will use their influence wisely as they lead their communities in this time of uncertainty. Pray for courage to speak the truth in love, and to be faithful to their calling as prophetic voices in Nigeria.

### Saturday 25 February

Pray that as Nigerians use their vote today, they will look not only to their own interests, but to the interests of others. Ask the Lord to appoint a president and a government who will rule justly and seek the good of all in Nigeria, so that the people 'may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness' (1 Timothy 2:2).

### Sunday 26 February

Pray that the candidates and parties will peacefully accept the election results. Pray that all candidates will show mature leadership, and guard against inciting violence, whatever the outcome may be.

### Monday 27 February

In times of change, the oppressed can be easily taken advantage of. Ask God to protect those internally displaced by extremist violence. Pray that the leaders of this country will put policies in place and actively work to improve the lives of the displaced, and pray for wisdom for Open Doors church partners in how best to minister to those in need.

### Tuesday 28 February

Please join in this prayer from the Open Doors Africa team: "Lord, whatever the outcome of these elections, may your church in Nigeria accept it with humility and grace, and stay the course of their calling whatever the circumstances may be. May they never be ashamed to share the good news of Jesus Christ, disciple their children and new believers in the Word and seek the wellbeing of others."

\*Name changed for security reasons



# WORLD WATCH LIST 2023 LAUNCH

---

**For the first time in three years, the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List will take place in-person on Wednesday 18 January.**

## **SPEAK OUT FOR YOUR PERSECUTED FAMILY**

Whilst the online launches have been well attended and positively received, there's no substitute for MPs being gathered in one room to hear about our persecuted family. This year's launch, on Wednesday 18 January, will feature speakers from North Korea, India and East Africa, and we'd love for your MP to be there to hear their stories. If you've yet to invite them, can you take two minutes to do this?

## **JOIN THE PRAYER EVENING AT WESTMINSTER CHAPEL**

Another way you can mark this year's launch is by joining us for a special prayer event taking place at Westminster Chapel, from 8-9pm. Come and hear first-hand testimony from a North Korean Christian and updates on the latest trends from the new World Watch List report, and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters. If you can't come to London, the prayer evening will also be livestreamed.

To invite your MP to the parliamentary launch and book your free place at the prayer evening, simply head to [\*\*opendoorsuk.org\*\*](https://opendoorsuk.org). Thank you!

