

WHAT DOES OPEN DOORS MEAN BY THE PERSECUTED CHURCH?

According to Open Doors' research, more than 365 million Christians face high levels of persecution or discrimination. That is around one in seven Christians, worldwide. Open Doors works in over 70 countries around the world and publishes an annual World Watch List which covers the countries in which Christians suffer the most extreme persecution.

WHY CHRISTIANS?

Open Doors' mission is to support Christians in countries where they face severe persecution because we believe that the global Christian church is a vital source of hope. We believe the best way to support an entire community is to strengthen and equip the local church in their nation so they can share the love of Christ with Christians and non-Christians alike. Our close and longstanding connections with Christian communities around the world enable them to give us an accurate, context-specific understanding of the challenges they face and the best way to respond.

Christians are not, of course, the only group who face persecution for their religious beliefs. But, as noted in the introduction to the 2019 Truro Review: "If Christians are being discriminated against in one context or another you can be confident other minorities are too. So, renewing a focus on Christian persecution is a way of expressing our concern for all minorities who find themselves under pressure. And ignoring Christian persecution might well mean we're ignoring other forms of repression as well."

WHAT IS 'PERSECUTION'?

Open Doors defines persecution against Christians as 'any hostile action towards a person or community motivated by their identification with the person of Jesus Christ'. Persecution and discrimination can take many forms. At its most extreme, Christians in some countries face imprisonment, torture and death because of their religious beliefs. We refer to this type of violent persecution as 'smash'. In other cases, Christians may suffer discrimination from their family, community or national government. We refer to this as 'squeeze'.

Persecution may be driven by a range of motivations including, Islamic extremism, religious nationalism, authoritarianism and dictatorial paranoia, and criminality.

Despite persecution, many Christians and churches are doing incredible work around the world, including reaching out to and supporting their communities. Open Doors works to support the most persecuted Christians across the world, providing Christian resources, trauma counselling and practical support.



PASTOR EDWARD

Pastor Edward is a local Open Doors partner in Syria who has witnessed many years of persecution and conflict. So-called Islamic State caused devastation, and the diminished Christian community in Syria still suffers persecution and discrimination – as well as having to rebuild their homes and communities.

"The church has distributed relief items to the neediest. There were months where we gave over a thousand packages," says Pastor Edward. "We brought love and care to the people in need, in the name of Christ." He and his wife have also opened a medical clinic, serving the whole community. "Most of the patients are non-Christians," he says. "Most of our doctors and staff are committed Christians who really try to serve medically and, at the same time, bring the cure of Christ."

AS AN MP WHAT WILL YOU DO?

- Hold the UK Government accountable for how it promotes human rights around the world. This is more vital than ever.
- Remember Christians who are persecuted for their beliefs and be committed to speaking up on their behalf. The church is a force for good.