

Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | November/December 2026

**This magazine
may contain
joy!**

Aicha's
courageous
story p8



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

IDOP 2026 1 November

Join with Christians around the world in praying for our persecuted church family in Africa. The *Arise Africa* IDOP resource has testimonies, prayers and full instructions to take to your church leader to use in a service.

Order your free IDOP Prayer Pack today at opendoorsuk.org/idop



LEAVE A LEGACY OF HOPE

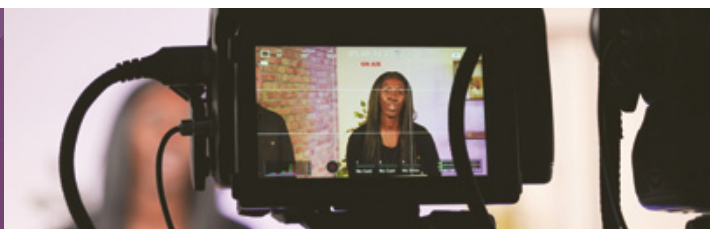
You can give your persecuted family hope of a brighter future by including a gift to Open Doors in your Will. Your gift will mean a lifetime of support for those who suffer for following Jesus.

If you have not yet made a Will, you can make one for FREE using our partner *Farewill*.

To find out more, go to opendoorsuk.org/legacy or phone 01993 460015.



Open Doors
**WORLD
WATCH
LIST 2027**
ONLINE



YOU'RE INVITED! Thursday 21 January 2027

Join a special online event to pray for the impact of the World Watch List 2027 parliamentary launch. You'll hear key highlights and recommendations, and join other Open Doors supporters from across the UK and Ireland in praying for those in power to help change the lives of our persecuted family. Register today for you or your prayer group at opendoorsuk.org/webinars

Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide.

Open Doors supplies Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also mobilise the church in the UK and Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

If you have any questions about the work of Open Doors, or would like to reprint any of the articles in this magazine, please do get in touch.

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COVER: Aicha (12) was the first Christian in her family in Burkina Faso

*Names changed for security reasons

LETTER FROM TIFFANY

A new season

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." JOSHUA 1:9

As I step into the role of CEO at Open Doors UK and Ireland, I've been both encouraged and challenged by God's message to Joshua to remain rooted in Him, as he took on new responsibilities. Most importantly, He promised to go with Joshua into that new season. That's my prayer as well, and I'm deeply thankful to all of you for praying for me and the team as we seek how best to serve and support the persecuted church. I recognise the blessing to 'inherit' a supporter base so loving, generous and prayerful.

You can see exactly what being rooted in God looks like in Aicha's story from Burkina Faso (p8). She's a young girl for whom God clearly has big plans. Despite violent persecution and rejection from her own family, she remains strong and courageous. She is tethered to God's Word and obedient to His calling.

Aicha is inspiring. She is also – like countless other persecuted children around the world – in need of our support and our prayers. For many of these young believers, Christmas is a time of extra vulnerability. Can I encourage you to do whatever you can to send joy to the youngest members of our persecuted church family?

For years, many of you will have heard Eddie Lyle, former Open Doors UK and Ireland CEO, speak often of Christians like Aicha who share our faith but not our freedoms. He made it his life's work to close the distance between the two. Eddie went to be with Jesus in September and will be much missed. You can read more about his extraordinary legacy in a tribute on p6.

Every blessing, and thank you for your giving, praying and speaking out throughout 2026. You are showing our persecuted brothers and sisters that they are never alone.



Tiffany

Tiffany Barrans
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

WORLD WATCH LIST BULLETIN

UK

Cash for courgettes

A young supporter has raised almost £30 for her persecuted family by growing courgettes and selling them to her mum's colleagues.

Lucy wanted to do something to help after going through the Open Doors Prayer Passport with her dad and two siblings. "They really enjoyed getting stuck in and even used it as an inspiration to lead the prayers in church one Sunday," explains her mother, Carolyn. "Lucy and her twin sister also often pray for Open Doors and the persecuted church before they go to bed."

The Prayer Passport is available for order at opendoorsuk.org/resources, and information and inspiration for fundraising can be found at opendoorsuk.org/fundraising



ABOVE Lucy's letter



Your support for Akpe's studies gives her joy for the future

TOGO

Peace and focus for teenager

A 17-year-old in Togo says your support has given her peace and enabled her to focus on serving her local church.

Akpe* was raised as a Christian, but her father has since turned to syncretism, a blend of Pentecostal Christian belief and traditional African religious practices. After Akpe and her mother refused to join him, he threw them out of the house and cut off financial support to Akpe.

With your help, Open Doors local partners stepped in, helping her complete last year's studies and contributing towards this year's fees, alongside covering other expenses.

"The money allowed me to pay for my school fees, buy food, clothes and school materials. Without this money, I wouldn't be able to go to school," Akpe shares.

"I continue my worship and my walk with the Lord."

"The support from brothers and sisters in Christ allowed me to continue my studies. It gave me peace and enabled me to focus on my ministry at church, which involves singing in the youth choir. I continue my worship and my walk with the Lord."

PRAY that Akpe will flourish in her studies and faith, and for her father's heart to soften.



The moment Muhat was baptised

CENTRAL ASIA

Secret baptism

The day that Muhat* from Central Asia decided to be baptised was the most exciting and the most dangerous day in his life. He had to get baptised in total secrecy – knowing that, if he were discovered, he could face even worse persecution than he's already received.

When Muhat's family discovered the secret of his conversion from Islam, they were furious, especially Muhat's father. "You are no longer my son," he told him. Eventually, Muhat was disowned and thrown out of home.

Open Doors local partners have paid for a new home and helped Muhat get a new job. Despite the pain of his family's reaction, he knows he has made the right decision. Through his baptism, he is declaring himself forever part of a new family and son of a loving Father.

PRAY for Muhat to keep growing in his faith and for the protection of converts in Central Asia.

SYRIA

Children escape bomb attack

Children playing in a church yard escaped harm when a bomb exploded outside Saint George Cathedral in Hama, Syria.

Footage appears to show a masked man on a motorcycle placing a device under a car parked directly outside the church on 13 September. It later detonated, damaging the church building. No service was taking place at the time and there were no injuries.

It's the latest church in Syria to be attacked or threatened since the transitional government took control in March 2025.

"There were no warning signs, threats, or disputes with anyone. It happened completely out of nowhere, which makes us and the parish even more worried," shared a cathedral priest.

PRAY for an end to all threat of attack and for peace for Christians.

CHINA

Christian arrested for listening to the Bible

A believer in China has been detained for listening to the Bible through a USB stick connected to his car.

During a long drive with his family to visit other believers, Brother AK* and his family listened to the Bible using a USB device connected to the car. However, at a checkpoint, it was spotted by police officers.

"Because I believe in Jesus, I was listening to the Bible through the USB," Brother AK told the officers.

Since the family has several children, including a baby under one, the police instructed AK's wife to take the children away while he was detained for questioning. At the time of writing, his whereabouts remain unknown.

PRAY for Brother AK's well-being and release, and for the Chinese church to stand strong amid hostility.

More stories

- Vietnam pastor sentenced to prison
- Bullet wound prolongs Oumar's anguish
- Attack kills 25 people, mostly women and children in Nigeria

Head to opendoorsuk.org/news or follow us @opendoorsuk for more news and updates





1953–2026 Eddie Lyle

Remembering our former CEO



Nick Page, author and Creative Lead, Open Doors UK&I

Eddie Lyle was a one-off. No-one who met him – certainly no-one who travelled with him or worked alongside him – could be unaffected by his wisdom, his humour, his energy and, above all, his passion for the persecuted church.

His passion was inspiring – and contagious. I first met Eddie nearly 40 years ago, when he was serving with Youth For Christ, but it was only after he became CEO of Open Doors in 2005 that we started to work together more and became not only colleagues, but friends.

Around three years ago, we wrote the book *Witness* together, a book which is structured around some of Eddie's stories from the past three decades. It was hard to make a selection. He was

a great storyteller and every time I thought we had the final list he would casually throw another great tale into the pot.

The reason he had all these stories was because he had been there. He was always willing to go to the tough places, from his first trip to a secret church meeting in Vietnam, to travelling under armed guard in Pakistan. It was not the danger or risk that attracted him: it was the

fact that there were people in trouble, brothers and sisters in Christ who needed to know that they were not forgotten.

THE GIFT OF MAKING FRIENDS

Eddie loved meeting people and he had the priceless gift of making friends wherever he went. This was not just networking; Eddie had a genuine interest and compassion for those

Eddie in Iraq with Father Daniel, now His Grace Mar Shimun Daniel, Bishop of Adiabene, 2018



whom he met, especially those brothers and sisters who faced suffering and persecution.

He wept with fathers whose daughters had been kidnapped by extremists; he knelt in the dirt to pray with grieving widows, whose husbands had been martyred for their faith. He mourned with those who mourned, and brought wisdom, kindness and hope into many dark situations.

“He believed in the power of prayer, because he had seen it in action.”

Above all, Eddie was a man of prayer. He believed in the power of prayer, because he had seen it in action. In *Witness* he told the story of visiting a church compound in Africa, where 3,500 desperate, hungry Christians had gathered. They had been forced to flee from their homes but there was simply not enough food to go round. The church leader turned to Eddie.

“Are you a man of faith, Mr Lyle?” he asked.

“Father, I believe that I am,” Eddie replied.

“Would you pray please for a miracle?”

So Eddie called people together and they prayed that God would multiply the meagre supplies of food. And,



Eddie with fathers of the kidnapped Chibok girls in Nigeria, 2016

a moment after they finished, two lorries drove into the compound loaded with rice and maize. “The church leader looked at me with complete and utter astonishment on his face,” Eddie wrote, “and I looked back at him with the same expression on mine. Then we joined the party.”

AN IMPULSIVE GENEROSITY

One of my favourite stories about Eddie comes from a teaching trip in India. A young pastor asked if he could see Eddie's preaching Bible. Over many years, Eddie had filled his Bible with notes and thoughts, and underlined significant and meaningful verses. When Eddie asked him, “What Bible do you use?” the young man brought out a battered school notebook, in which he had written out his favourite verses from the Scriptures.

“I tried to put myself in his shoes,” Eddie later recalled, “thinking about how he must struggle without his own copy of God's Word to strengthen himself, defend himself, comfort and teach his people.”

At the end of the week, that young pastor went home with Eddie's Bible.

I love that story. It captures something essential about Eddie. An impulsive generosity. Compassion, sacrifice, kindness, grace.

Eddie served with Open Doors UK & Ireland for over 20 years, first as CEO, then as President. He continued as consultant for Open Doors International. He said he retired, but no one believed him.

That's one of the reasons why his death feels such a loss. He had, you feel, a lot more to give. But as he always reminded me, we need to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. We grieve for the friend we have lost. But we also celebrate the unique, irreplaceable Eddie who changed so many of our lives, and who has now gone to be with the Saviour to whom he gave his life.

You can read many more of Eddie's stories in *Witness*. Order your free copy at opendoorsuk.org/witness





Aicha hopes for **JOY** this Christmas

Aicha was only eight years old when her uncles started beating her. Why? Because she had chosen to follow Jesus.

"My father's older brother and my mother's younger brother used to beat me because of my faith," she shares. Even her father's sister joined in the violence. They were particularly keen to stop Aicha going to church and would lie in wait for her on the path. "One day, I dressed up to go to church, and on the way my uncle met me," shares Aicha. "He beat me then forced me to go back home."

But Aicha was determined to keep going to services. "Despite the trials, I persevered because I wanted to follow and serve the Lord," she says. "I continued to go to church, joyfully, to hear God's Word."

"My uncles used to beat me because of my faith."

Her parents implored their wider family to stop attacking Aicha, but they didn't fully understand her faith or why it was so important to her. Because Aicha, at eight years old, was the first Christian in her family.

HOW AICHA MET JESUS

Like approximately three-quarters of the population of Burkina Faso, Aicha grew up as a Muslim. Her mother and stepfather, Asseta and Idrissa, and their extended families followed Islam. They live in a small community with dirt tracks, donkeys and trees rather than roads, cars and tower blocks, and their modest home is made cheerful by the bright blue doors in the pale stone walls and the sunshine-yellow outfits Aicha (now 12) and her siblings, Azis (10) and sister Somaia (7), wear.

As with many communities in the country, Christians





Aicha was the first in her family to follow Jesus

and Muslims live alongside each other, often peacefully. And that's how Aicha met a local preacher called Pastor Steven. She was captivated by what he shared about Jesus. She told him: "I would like to give my life to Jesus, because I heard that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life."

"I was glad to tell my parents about Jesus."

Now a follower of Jesus, Aicha started attending church with her neighbours and their children. She quickly began to see significant changes in her life and character, and those of Azis and Somaia, who also

started going to the church. Asseta soon noticed too.

"I used to listen to their conversations, and I realised there was a change in their behaviour," she says. "I noticed they had become wiser in their conduct in the family. They became more obedient. They remembered that Jesus said children should obey their parents."

"I was glad to tell my parents about Jesus," says Aicha, "because I wanted them to believe in Him as well."

GOD SPOKE TO AICHA'S MUM

The changes in Aicha pleased and intrigued Asseta, but she wasn't ready to explore Christianity for

herself yet. That began to change when Idrissa became very sick.

"They started treating him with traditional medicine, to no avail," she remembers. "The more they treated, the more he got worse. My family had no more money to continue the treatment."

That was when someone suggested Asseta take her husband to the pastor for prayer. Though she was willing for Aicha to go to the church with her friends, she couldn't imagine taking Idrissa to be prayed for by Christians. "I hardened my heart," she says. "I said, no matter the seriousness of the sickness, I will not take him to church."

But God intervened. One night, He spoke directly to Asseta.

"I heard a voice that spoke to me, saying: 'Go to the pastor and you will find the solution,'" she recalls. "The voice repeated this three times."

Even though it was midnight, Asseta responded to the call immediately. "I explained our problem and the pastor followed us to our house," she says. "He led my husband to give his life to Jesus, then prayed for him." Idrissa's health improved, though he wasn't fully healed. But he and Asseta received something much more precious: Jesus.

"We all started our Christian journey," says Asseta. "And this was when our persecutions started."

REJECTION AND HARDSHIP

While Christians and Muslims live alongside each other in relative harmony in their community, that doesn't mean there isn't any persecution. The most widely reported form of persecution in Burkina Faso is violence by radicalised jihadists, in which whole communities are targeted and believers are killed, maimed or displaced. But this is not the only form of oppression that believers experience in the country.

For converts like Aicha and her parents, persecution can come from closer to

home. Leaving Islam is seen as deeply shaming to the wider family, and new believers are likely to face extreme pressure to return to their old faith by their families and communities – even when they are as young as Aicha.

"It was God's plan for the children to stand firm, then lead us, their parents, later to be saved."

"Our children persevered despite the beatings and rejection," says Asseta. "I believe that God was the one who gave such a boldness to our children, to persevere despite the persecution. It was God's plan for the children to stand firm, then lead us, their parents, later to be saved."

Now that children and parents were all believers, their wider family cut them off totally.

"When we were still Muslims, we used to get support from our families," shares Asseta. "After we received Jesus, everything changed. From that moment, they completely rejected us and never supported us again. We had many trials just because we gave our life to Christ."

HELP AND HOPE

Many Christian children around the world suffer when their families are targeted in this way. Choosing to follow Jesus may mean they lose wider family, financial security and even access to daily necessities, like food – all of which were painful to experience during a stage of life that is often fundamental to their ongoing faith.

Aicha with her parents and siblings





Aicha with her family – Asseta and Idrissa, her mum and stepdad, and her younger siblings Azis and Somaia



When Open Doors local partners heard about the persecution Aicha and her family were facing, they were keen to help strengthen and encourage them, and give joy to those who had already experienced so much hardship for the gospel.

“The ministry [Open Doors partners] supported us tremendously,” says Asseta. “Through the ministry’s support, my husband was able to get medical care. Before that, my husband was staying at home without effective treatment.”

As well as this vital assistance with medical bills, Open Doors partners have given Aicha and her family food support – bags of rice, corn and oil. Having been cut off from their wider family,

these essentials are a start in helping these courageous believers keep going and see joy in their faith, rather than being overwhelmed by anxieties and fears for the future. Many other families like theirs need the same support, and this courageous family needs your ongoing prayers and support to persevere.

A MESSAGE TO YOU

Asseta has a message for Open Doors supporters: “Thank you so much, and I pray that God will bless and reward you. I also ask God to continue strengthening you in this great work you have been doing. Our whole family is so glad today, thanks to the support that gave us hope and made us more confident for standing firm in our faith.”

“I am also glad for the support of the ministry and all they have done for us,” agrees Aicha. “I thank the ministry for supporting us; I pray that God will continue to bless them.”

“I thank the ministry for supporting us.”

With your ongoing support, Aicha can have joy and hope for the future. When she’s asked what she wants to see in the years to come, she is clear about her passion to share the gospel. She says, “My hope for the future is that I want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so I can go around and tell other people about the gospel of Jesus.”

Aicha and her family can have hope for the future, with your help



SEND JOY

Christmas is a time when young believers are often particularly isolated and vulnerable – and yet it is still a time of celebration. “The main message of Christmas is that Jesus the Son of God was born to save the world,” declares Aicha. “No matter the life you live, come and receive Jesus as your Saviour. Jesus loves you and He will save you from your sins.”

“The main message of Christmas is that Jesus the Son of God was born to save the world.”

This Christmas season, there are millions of children and families who need practical and spiritual support. It’s often a struggle to get the food, medicine and shelter they need. Above all, they

need to know they aren’t forgotten by their global family. Supporting young believers like Aicha can strengthen and encourage them today, and also helps lay a strong foundation for the future of the church.

This Christmas, will you send joy to children like Aicha?

“I wish you Happy Christmas,” says Aicha. “May the peace of God be with you all!”

PLEASE PRAY

- Aicha asks, “Please, pray for God to bless me so I can take care of my parents and siblings. Also pray for me to be filled with the Holy Spirit to preach the gospel everywhere.”
- Pray for children around the world who suffer for following Jesus – that they will know God’s comfort and love, and have joy for the future.

- Pray for Open Doors partners as they strengthen and encourage the children of the persecuted church.

You can find more prayer points for children and families in your Prayer Diary.

PLEASE GIVE

You can support Christian children and families at opendoorsuk.org/children

- **Every £19** could give a persecuted Christian child access to weekly sessions of Christian education
- **Every £28** could give vital food aid and housing for a month to a persecuted family
- **Every £71** could give medical care to a vulnerable believer and their family.

"GOD WAS NEVER SILENT" YOUR IMPACT IN 2026

Thank you for the unforgettable impact you've had on our persecuted family this year. From the covert meetings with North Koreans to the Christian 'famous' in prison, here's a sample of the difference you've made...

★ BACKSEAT BELIEVER

In January, we introduced you to Evangelist Cho* (BELOW), who would search out refugees from North Korea, giving them food, water and something far more precious: a Bible. He died last year from an illness, but, with your support, others are following in his footsteps.

Not long ago, co-worker Seo-Jun* sat in the backseat of a car parked on a quiet road. Beside him was a woman he'd never met before who'd fled North Korea.

"Have you ever heard of God – or the gospel?" Seo-Jun asked.

For the next hour, Seo-Jun carefully articulated the good news, emphasising that – far from mattering very little as the North Korean regime would have her believe – she is created and loved by God.

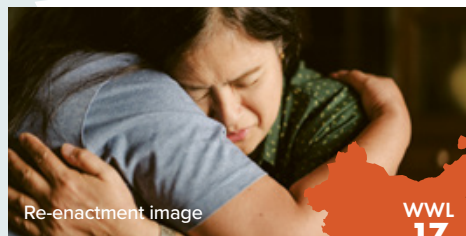
"Can I also believe in that God?" she said, before giving her life to Jesus.

Given the dangers, it should be impossible for people from North Korea, like this woman, to encounter Jesus, but nothing is impossible with God – and you continue to be part of that impossible plan.



Re-enactment image

WWL
01



Re-enactment image

WWL
17

ZHANG RELEASED FROM PRISON

Having shared their story with you in the summer, we're thrilled to report that Zhang* has been released from prison in China and reunited with his wife Jinyi*! (ABOVE)

Zhang said separation from his wife, children and the young people he shepherded was hardest. He is overwhelmed with gratitude as he reflects on how you've come alongside Jinyi in his absence.

"Your support for my wife was a great comfort and strength to me in prison," he shares. "It reminded me that God was never silent. He was at work all along."

Zhang still faces close monitoring and he's struggling to find work given the severe impact heavy labour in prison has had on his health. It's increased the burden on Jinyi, as she balances serving young adults with caring for her family. However, they remain supported by local Open Doors partners.

"Our family never imagined that anyone would walk alongside us while my husband was in prison, and even less that someone would continue to walk with us after his release," says Jinyi.



WWL
53

★ SEEING CHANGE THROUGH A SALON

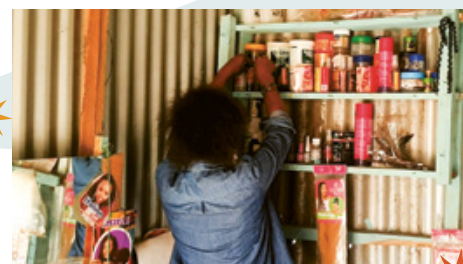
Meanwhile, Open Doors' ongoing *See.Change* campaign continues to help our persecuted sisters flourish in their God-given identities and callings.

Nashola* (ABOVE) lives in a Muslim-majority region in Kenya where the church is marginalised and believers can struggle economically. This makes them vulnerable to bribes from those who want to entice them to return to Islam. For Nashola, the risk has been particularly acute since her husband's death.

★ "I'm very grateful for where you got me from to where I am now."

To counter this threat, Open Doors local partners ran a vocational training programme. Nashola attended, after which she was equipped to build her own salon.

"I use the money I earn for school fees for my children," says Nashola, who enjoys using the salon to share God's love with locals. "I'm very grateful for where you got me from to where I am now. I did not expect that I would be here. I never thought that I would ever learn about these skills."



THE GUARD WHO SMILED

The turn of the year saw more than 60 believers arrested in Yemen. It reinforced the need to help strengthen what remains in Yemen and throughout the Middle East and North Africa, our focus in May and June.

WWL
03

An update from Yemen reports that prison cells have become pulpits, with believers boldly seeking to share the gospel in what they see is a time for harvest (Matthew 9:37).

"As I was being searched at the prison entrance during a visit, the guard told me that my husband was famous," said the wife of a detained believer. "He's known to be kind, caring and constantly sharing about Jesus. He openly shares that he is a Christian." The guard let her in with a smile.

"The guard told me that my husband was famous."

Open Doors regional partners remain in close contact with the families and friends of those imprisoned, offering encouragement, prayer and practical support.

THANK YOU!

These stories not only highlight the breadth of your impact in 2026 but also the depth, with God working powerfully in the lives of our persecuted family through your gifts and prayers. Thank you!

As we head into 2027, our brothers and sisters will again rely on your support to help them stand strong and contribute to the long-term survival of the church.

If you don't already, why not consider committing to regular support – be it praying, giving or speaking out? To get started, sign up for regular updates at opendoorsuk.org/subscribe

ARISE AFRICA

COUNTDOWN TO THE PETITION HAND-IN



Tiffany Barrans, CEO, Open Doors UK&I

On 12 November 2026, I'll be joining Christians from sub-Saharan Africa as we present the *Arise Africa* petition to 10 Downing Street. It will be a momentous day. Your prayers, and the prayers of Open Doors supporters across the world, will carry us as we join the African church in calling for change.

A knock on the door of 10 Downing Street is a collective knock for the whole body of Christ – and our prayer is that many doors will open, leading to tangible change for our persecuted family in Africa.

I've only recently started as CEO of Open Doors UK and Ireland, but I've been closely involved with *Arise*

Africa for a number of years in my previous role as Global Advocacy Director at Open Doors International. It's been a privilege to walk hand-in-hand with the church here in the UK and Ireland, but also with the church globally.

AWAKENING GIANTS

At the beginning of the *Arise Africa* campaign, we kept coming back to a phrase: 'awaken the sleeping giants'. The giants of the media, of governments and of the global church. Praise God, we are seeing all three of those prayers begin to be answered. What a blessing it is to see the global church start waking up to the persecution and opposition faced by their faithful, courageous brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa.

In turn, I've seen our family in Africa have a journey of awakening. Increasingly, they are standing strong together in prayer and action

across the continent. They're discovering that they aren't alone in fighting persecution. Almost every country in the world is already represented in the *Arise Africa* petition – alongside more than 200,000 voices from Christians in Africa.

"The hand-in of the petition on 12 November isn't the end, of course. It's just the beginning."

A BODY OF MANY PARTS

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul writes: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." We each have different roles to play. Some of us are on the front-line. Some of us are thousands of miles away from the violence – but, as Brother Andrew said, "Our prayers go where we cannot." Collectively, we can

strengthen and equip our brothers and sisters in Christ in their call for protection, justice and restoration. I'm moved by the entreaty of Pastor Barnabas in Nigeria. He says: "Come on board and sign this petition, so that we can be of the same voice; so that we can break the silence."

Your support for the *Arise Africa* campaign is already bringing change. In the past year, more than 20 nations have spoken out against the violence facing Christians in sub-Saharan Africa. Five governments in the West have made practical, long-term commitments to respond to this violence. Representatives from a number of African governments came together to sign the Accra Declaration, pledging to address threats to freedom of religion and belief. Persecutors are facing justice for the first time. Before, there was total impunity. Nobody was



Pastor Barnabas from Nigeria, who was displaced, implores believers to sign the petition

held accountable. That is changing. All of this is what your prayers are already doing. Imagine how much more can be done!

STOP THE VIOLENCE. START THE HEALING.

The hand-in of the petition on 12 November isn't the end, of course. It's just the beginning. It's our collective knock on the door, and now we must walk through and ask for change. Please keep praying that the voices of the African church will be heard, and for protection, justice and restoration. Please sign the petition, share the petition and, above all, pray for its lasting impact. Together, we can stop the violence and start the healing. Thank you!

PLEASE PRAY

- That the recipients of the petition will be moved to use their position to bring change
- For wisdom for Open Doors representatives as they share key recommendations with decision-makers
- For lasting protection, justice and restoration for the church in sub-Saharan Africa.

PLEASE SHARE

You can join a digital swell of thousands sharing the stories of our African church family from 30 October–1 November. Find out more and get ready by following @opendoorsuk on Instagram, X and Facebook.

PRAY FOR OTHER EVENTS AROUND THE WORLD

Across the world, many Open Doors teams will be presenting the *Arise Africa* petition to governments and decision-makers. Please pray for each petition hand-in to lead to lasting change for our brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa. These are just some of the plans that you can lift up in prayer:

- **November 2026:** UK, EU, Netherlands, France, Spain
- **December 2026:** UN, Sweden
- **January 2027:** Italy, Norway, Denmark
- **February 2027:** Canada
- **2027:** African Union

Deadline:
Make sure your petition is returned by
2 November 2026
opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica

WHY YOU SHOULD INVITE YOUR MP TO THE WORLD WATCH LIST LAUNCH



Fiona Fearon, Head of Advocacy & Public Affairs, Open Doors UK&I

The annual launch of the Open Doors World Watch List has become a fixed point in the parliamentary calendar. It provides a rare opportunity for MPs to hear directly from Christians who have experienced persecution, and to reflect on the challenges to freedom of religion or belief faced by Christians and others worldwide. In January, 113 MPs from across the House attended the launch. Next year, on Wednesday 13 January, we hope to see even more attend.

WHY CHRISTIANS NEED TO SPEAK OUT

Support for all those persecuted on the grounds of faith or belief remains as vital as ever. Conflict and state fragility around the world leaves Christian communities highly vulnerable. In Sudan, Christians have faced violent attacks in the context of the civil war, and suffer discrimination as they seek to recover and rebuild. In Nigeria, violence from many different sources continues to devastate Christian communities. Open Doors' *Arise Africa* petition, which has already secured over 200,000 signatures

from the UK alone, calls on governments in sub-Saharan Africa and the international community to do all we can to stop the killings so that healing and restoration can begin.

**"Simply contacting
your MP can have
a real impact."**

Violence is not the only threat to freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Open Doors' research tracks not only the 'smash' of violent attack, but also the 'squeeze' of discrimination and pressure on Christians. Around the

world, converts to Christianity face difficulties accessing their legal rights after their conversion. In places where persecution coexists with gender inequality, Christian women face additional vulnerability due to their faith and their gender. And in cases where Christians have suffered displacement, they may experience additional discrimination in contexts of persecution due to their vulnerable state as internally displaced people or refugees.

CHANGES WE'RE SEEING

FoRB remains a leading priority for the UK and is a subject of great interest

in Parliament. The UK's Special Envoy on FoRB, David Smith MP, has set out the terms of the UK FoRB Strategy, which commits the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) to continue to emphasise FoRB for all, including Christians. The strategy focuses on ten priority countries, eight of which appeared on the Open Doors World Watch List 2026.

Following an Open Doors campaign, the government has committed to publishing its Human Rights and Democracy Report later this year. This will provide a fresh opportunity for MPs to hold the government to account for its efforts to promote human rights around the world. The research and recommendations from the World Watch List annual report will be an important contribution to this debate.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

MPs are encouraged to attend the annual launch by Open Doors supporters in their constituencies, like you, who tell them that the persecution of

Christians is an issue which matters deeply to them. Simply contacting your MP, particularly as part of a wider movement of supporters, can therefore have a real impact. Thank you to those of you who regularly speak to your MPs about the persecution of Christians, ensuring that this issue is addressed in Parliament, including at the coming launch in January.

Please keep praying for your MP. Pray both that they will attend the World Watch List launch and for the important job they do throughout the year. It really makes a difference.

HOW TO INVITE YOUR MP

You can invite your MP to the World Watch List 2027 launch using the invitation enclosed with your magazine. It includes a box for you to write why Christian persecution matters to you – a story that moved you, how your faith influences your concern for human rights. Find out more at opendoorsuk.org/advocacy

BELOW David Smith MP, UK Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, speaking at the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List 2026



 **Open Doors**
**WORLD
WATCH
LIST 2027**
ONLINE

YOU'RE INVITED

Thursday 21 January
7.30-8.30pm

A week after the World Watch List parliamentary launch, it's your turn! You can join Open Doors supporters from across the UK and Ireland to hear highlights from the launch and pray for the government as they consider our key recommendations.

Your prayers go hand-in-hand with Open Doors' advocacy, and this online event will give even greater power to our work with government. You can register today at opendoorsuk.org/webinars

SAMMAN, SASHA AND ZHENYA

CENTRAL ASIA

Samman, Sasha and Zhenya were prepared for another dark Christmas alone – until a knock at the door changed everything.

It was another ordinary day for Samman* and his young children, Sasha* and Zhenya*. They had got used to quiet evenings sat together, their eyes squeezed shut and hands clasped. The prayer was the same: a desperate plea for a family – a church family. The alternative? Another Christmas, another year, spent alone.

But when a knock came at the door, the evening became like no other.

CURIOSITY TO CONVICTION

In Samman's home in Central Asia, his parents seemed too

busy to consider religion or God. "They had their own worries," he recalls. "They had never heard of God."

"The prayers of believers started changing everything in my life."

In Samman's mid-20s, he came across a Bible, and curiosity led him to begin reading. Then, he met a Christian minister who was running a secret prayer house nearby. They became friends, and Samman constantly questioned him about the Bible. Curiosity turned into commitment as Samman began attending the prayer house regularly, and

commitment into conviction when he decided to be baptised – a dangerous decision that, if discovered, could cost Samman his freedom, even his life.

A PRECIPICE

Nine years later, the peace of Samman's family was shattered when his wife left him and their children. Now, Samman had to start bringing them to the prayer house. In a conservative Muslim culture, a single father raising his children carries a social stigma which could become dangerous for the church. Some in the prayer house feared that this attention could expose them. Out of fear, the church asked Samman and his children to leave. Now alone, all they could do was pray,

trusting that God had not abandoned them.

Then the knock came.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

"We were talking and praying, asking God for help," Samman remembers. "That's when we heard them outside. Only when they came in and started talking to us did we realise they were believers who had found us. I don't know where they came from – maybe Jesus told them about our situation? The important thing was that they found us and everything started to change."

The visitors were Open Doors partners meeting families to offer support. They sat with Samman and his children and, through them, God provided the answer: a new church community whose members welcomed them.

"We started going to the house of prayer and attended every service," Samman says. "Through prayer, we felt encouraged in our spiritual and physical growth. My health improved, and we began reading the Bible and praying more. The prayers of believers started changing everything in my life."

CHRISTMAS TRANSFORMED

That Christmas would perhaps be the

most memorable for Samman's family. For the first time in a while, they celebrated the holiday as part of a family of believers.

"For me, the most important thing during the Christmas holiday is to be in the prayer house with my whole family and to pray to God," Samman says. "The fellowship with believers – that is the most important thing."

Some simple gifts provided by supporters of Open Doors showed Sasha and Zhenya that they weren't forgotten. "In the small box, there were goodies, and in the big box there was a toy and some more sweets," Sasha says. "I want to say a huge, huge thank you to those who gave the gifts."

"I want to say to the people who prepared a gift for Christmas that I bless them and say thank you," Zhenya shares.

Through the greatest gift of love, their hope has been reignited – mirroring God's gift of Jesus who came to meet us in our hopelessness.

"I want to encourage believers to truly trust in Jesus," Samman affirms. "He will come and help in any situation. God has given me children and a home, and He continues to bless me to this day."

† LISTEN

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')." (Matthew 1:23)

⌄ LINGER

Reflect on the love of God as He came to us in Jesus – the infinite God taking on our humanity for our sake.

➡ LIVE

How might you share the love that Samman experienced with those around you this Christmas?

✋ PRAY

- For Samman and his children to grow in faith
- That God would watch over Sasha and Zhenya
- For Samman's ministry in the prayer house.



ABOVE Sasha and Zhenya receive Christmas cards; OPPOSITE Samman, Sasha and Zhenya share a meal

Send joy in time for Christmas

When Aicha in Burkina Faso became a Christian, her relatives reacted violently. "My uncles used to beat me because of my faith," she says. She was only eight years old.

Her parents later became Christians too, and now the whole family faces rejection and financial hardship. It's a struggle to get the food and medicine they need – or to have hope for Aicha's future.

This Christmas, will you send joy to vulnerable families like Aicha's?

Every £28 could give vital food aid and housing for another month to a persecuted family.

Visit opendoorsuk.org/children or call **01993 460015** to make your Christmas gift today. Thank you.

