


# Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | July/August 2023



**“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘... plans to give you hope and a future.’”**

JEREMIAH 29:11

## | Egypt

### **Saturday 1 July**

Although Egypt's president speaks positively about Egypt's Christians, weak law enforcement makes Christians vulnerable to communal and mob violence, particularly in rural areas of Upper Egypt where Islamist groups are influential. Pray that the authorities will take more action to protect the rights of Egypt's Christians.

### **Sunday 2 July**

Christians are generally treated as second-class citizens and often face discrimination in education and employment. This particularly impacts young Christians, who struggle to find jobs and are often forced to work in hazardous environments. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting young people with livelihood training and microloans to give them hope and a future.

### **Monday 3 July**

As a young teenager, Baher\* lost an arm while working in a stone quarry to support his family (see Magazine p8). He tried to start his own business, but no one would hire him because he is a Christian. Give thanks that Open Doors partners have helped him start a sheep-breeding business. "If you had not helped me, I would not have had any income source," he says. "You lifted my morale and helped restore my relationship with God."

### **Tuesday 4 July**

Baher also joined a youth discipleship group where he could grow in his faith. "Even though I cannot read, I learned to listen to God's Word," he says. "The audio Bible allows me to listen to the word of God daily and experience an intimate relationship with Him." Pray that these groups can help more vulnerable young people become confident and courageous in their faith.

### **Wednesday 5 July**

Although Egypt's constitution states that 'freedom of belief is absolute', conversion from Islam to another faith is not allowed and is punished via blasphemy laws. Social hostility towards converts is very high and even rumours of conversion can lead to mob violence. Pray for wisdom and strength for believers from Muslim backgrounds living out their faith in hostile environments.

### **Thursday 6 July**

Radical Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood continue to have nationwide support, and violent Islamic militants are openly active in the northern Sinai peninsula. Ask the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself to those who persecute His people, and lead them to the truth which will set them free.

### **Friday 7 July**

A local believer asks us to pray with them: "May the love of Jesus be reflected to Muslims in Egypt, and may the Christians show Muslims practical love through serving them." Give thanks for the love many Egyptian Christians have

for their Muslim neighbours, and pray that their witness will draw many to Christ.

## | Middle East

### **Saturday 8 July**

After decades of war, persecution and political unrest, many young Christians feel they have no future in their own countries and believe they will have better opportunities abroad. Pray that those who are dreaming of leaving the region will find a reason or even a calling to stay and serve God in their nation.

### **Sunday 9 July**

"Many of the young people are only thinking of leaving Iraq," says Open Doors partner, Bishop Daniel. "My big dream is that they will stay. Most of our activities in Iraq focus on bringing the hope of Christ in the lives of our young people." Ask Jesus to bring hope to young people through trauma healing, vocational training and leadership training courses run by Open Doors partners.

### **Monday 10 July**

Pray for young people who have left the Middle East in search of a better future in the West. Pray that they will hold on to Jesus and will find churches where they can grow in their faith.

### **Tuesday 11 July**

'Go Sports' is a new discipleship training programme in Egypt and Syria that brings young people together to play basketball, volleyball and football as well as teaching them the Bible and how to apply it in their daily life. From each

group two participants become coaches of a new group. Pray that this initiative will inspire young leaders and equip them to spread God's Word.

### **Wednesday 12 July – Iraq**

Give thanks for the success of the microloans scheme being run by Open Doors partners in Iraq. Of about 300 loans given since 2020, all beneficiaries are faithfully giving back. Ask God to bless these initiatives and pray for wisdom for our partners as they decide whom to grant future loans to.

### **Thursday 13 July – Iraq**

Pray for a leadership course being run for church leaders in Iraq to grow the character of the leaders and help them build healthy communities. Pray that the course will help create a united vision for the church in Iraq and equip participants to spread hope.

### **Friday 14 July – Syria**

Pray for the SPARK training programme which focuses on training young people in servant leadership. Give thanks for the 72 young people taking part and pray that what they learn will bear much fruit in their churches and communities.

### **Saturday 15 July – Syria**

Open Doors supports a Centre of Hope in Latakia that provides educational support to children. As well as providing private tutoring, it also runs spiritual activities to help children learn more about God. Pray that many children's lives will be transformed through the support they receive here.

\*Name changed for security reasons

# Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**

You've been faithfully praying into two situations in Nigeria and Iran – and your prayers have been answered!

## Two more Chibok girls rescued



**It's more than nine years since 275 girls were abducted from their school in Chibok, Nigeria. Since then, more than 150 students have found freedom – and earlier this year two more were rescued!**

Hauwa Maltha and Esther Marcus, both now aged 26, were fetching water on 21 April when they were found and rescued by the Nigerian army.

The women – who had gathered with their classmates for exams in April 2014 when Boko Haram militants arrived and coaxed the girls onto trucks and headed for the Sambisa Forest – said that they had been forcefully married to Boko Haram fighters. When the men died or disappeared, they were given to other men. Each

of them has been 'married' three times. Esther has one child, whilst Hauwa gave birth to her second child days after being freed.

Following Hauwa's and Esther's rescue, and the several who found freedom last year, at least 90 women are said to remain missing.

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Give thanks for Hauwa's and Esther's release, and pray for complete healing
- That all girls – now women – who remain missing, will find freedom
- That the missing girls' parents will be upheld by God's presence.

## Couple released from prison

**In wonderful news from Iran, a convert who has Parkinson's has been released from prison along with his wife!**

Homayoun and Sara (BELOW) – who have been imprisoned in Tehran's notorious Evin Prison since August 2022 for involvement in a house church – were acquitted at a hearing in May. This was after their first two requests for appeal were rejected.

The judge said there was 'no evidence' that Sara and Homayoun had acted against national security. He added that it was 'natural' to gather with people of one's faith, and having books related to Christianity was 'an extension of their beliefs'.

"The reports by the officers of the Ministry of Intelligence about organisation of home-groups to promote Christianity,

membership and participation in home-groups are not considered as acts against the country's security, and the law has not recognised them as criminal activity," the judge stated.

This is a wonderful answer to prayer. Thank you to all who have faithfully prayed for this courageous couple, and please continue to pray for their healing and wellbeing.

### **PLEASE PRAY**

- Praise God for this wonderful answer to prayer!
- That the couple will heal from their ordeal and will face no further scrutiny for their faith
- That this ruling will lead to the release of other Christian prisoners.



© Article 18

## | Manipur, India

### **Sunday 16 July**

Please keep praying for Christians in Manipur following May's outbreak of ethno-religious violence which left at least 80 believers dead, 400 churches destroyed and 10,000 believers homeless (see Magazine p4). Pray for comfort for the bereaved and displaced, and for an end to the violence.

### **Monday 17 July**

There are fears that the violence will exacerbate Christian persecution. Hindu extremists have already used the crisis to hunt out church leaders and force Christian communities to convert to Hinduism. "We want to be strong," says a local believer. "Pray that God helps us."

### **Tuesday 18 July**

The violence has forced thousands of Christians from their homes, many of which have been destroyed. Believers have also been deeply traumatised. Pray that Open Doors local partners – who, with your help, are providing emergency support for those affected – will be given wisdom, strength and protection.

### **Wednesday 19 July**

The outbreak of violence was met with a muted response from the government. It echoes the refusal of India's Solicitor General earlier this year to acknowledge Christian persecution in many parts of the country. Pray that a light will shine on the government's urgent need to better protect religious minorities in India.

## | FIFA Women's World Cup

### **Thursday 20 July**

The Women's World Cup – beginning today in Australia and New Zealand – features five countries on the World Watch List: Nigeria, China, Vietnam, Colombia and Morocco. Pray that Open Doors' new resource (see p16) will inspire many to pray for Christians facing persecution in these countries.

### **Friday 21 July – Nigeria**

There is an informal agreement among political parties in Nigeria that presidential terms switch between Christian and Muslim leaders. However, Bola Tinubu's victory in this year's election means consecutive leaders are Muslims. Pray that Christians will get equal treatment under the new government.

### **Saturday 22 July – China**

Praise God that, despite a ban on under-18s attending church activities, young people are still being reached and discipled. "These young believers spent time in worship and prayer for their country, family members and other non-believers," said a partner who visited an underground youth camp. "It was very powerful!"

### **Sunday 23 July – Vietnam**

Pastor Phuc\* died in prison whilst serving a 16-year sentence for his faith. "The family have been suffering a difficult life and it got worse because their hope for his return is no longer possible," reports a partner. Ask the Lord to heal, comfort and restore Phuc's wife and two children.

### **Monday 24 July – Colombia**

Many churches in Colombia do amazing work in speaking out against violence and corruption, and even telling gang members about Jesus. But this can come at a huge cost, because it can make Christians – particularly leaders – a target for attack. Pray for continued boldness, strength and protection.

### **Tuesday 25 July – Morocco**

Laila\* was divorced by her husband after he discovered her Christian faith. She is now a single mother and struggling to survive in a society where women mostly have to rely on men for financial security. Pray that Laila will know that 'God is my help' and 'the one who sustains me' (Psalm 54:4).

### **Wednesday 26 July**

This year, Open Doors is attending some 13 festivals across the UK and Ireland, including New Wine, Keswick and Satellites. Ask the Holy Spirit to inspire and strengthen staff and volunteers, and pray that many new hearts will be stirred into committing their support to our persecuted family.

## | Persecuted children

### **Thursday 27 July – North Korea**

Pray for believers secretly listening to Christian radio broadcasts from abroad who want to learn more about the Bible and how to covertly explain the gospel to their children. Ask the Holy Spirit to meet these needs.

### **Friday 28 July – Colombia**

The Open Doors Children's Centre in Colombia provides safety, education and discipleship for young people vulnerable to persecution from armed groups and indigenous communities. There are currently 70 children aged 11-18 at the centre. Pray that each one will know how deeply they're loved by God.

### **Saturday 29 July – China**

Kindergartens in Wenzhou have asked parents to sign a document that forbids them from teaching religion to their children. Pray that Christian parents in China will know how to be 'shrewd as snakes' (Matthew 10:16) as they seek to share their faith with their children.

### **Sunday 30 July – Central Asia**

Around four times a year, Open Doors partners run an event for children of deaf adults. In society, and even in churches, these children can be marginalised. The aim is to reassure them of God's love. At one event, children were invited for prayer and 45 responded! Praise God for this initiative.

### **Monday 31 July – Sub-Saharan Africa**

"Sometimes when I am with friends, and they talk about their fathers, I can't say anything because I don't have a father anymore," says Traore from Burkina Faso. He's one of the countless children in sub-Saharan Africa who've lost their father because of extremist violence. Pray that each one will know God as the 'father to the fatherless' (Psalm 68:5).

\*Names changed for security reasons



# RESTORING HOPE THROUGH MUSIC IN IRAQ

The Melody singers are giving young people joy and purpose

**In Isaiah 58:12, the prophet writes: “Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.”**

The Melody singers from Iraq are doing just that with their music. In a church square once used as a shooting range by so-called Islamic State (IS) fighters, Christians now sing for the glory of God. Where IS tried to put an end to Christian faith, Christians are singing again. They believe they have a hope and a future – and, through their music, they are helping other young people like them to believe the same.

Melody came together during displacement. Sam, Farid and Fady were living in Erbil, after being forced to leave their homes in the Nineveh Plain by IS militants. “We began

meeting there and playing,” says Sam, leader of the band. “Playing music gave us energy, we were able to feel alive again. Doing nothing in Erbil, we tried to revive ourselves through music and revive others as well.”

## MUSIC IS A LANGUAGE OF PEACE, OF LOVE

Once they had returned home to Qaraqosh, they asked a few women to sing with them. Hiba (25) is one of the singers. “God gives a gift to every person, and this talent must be used,” she says. “In our culture, it’s problematic for a girl to sing. I joined to break this limitation and obstacle... The most important thing is to have a purpose, to seek it and continue the journey.”

The group play for both Christian and Muslim audiences, sharing their faith

through their music. Farid (27) is a singer and also plays the daf (a frame instrument). “I want to keep on presenting music that surpasses the noise of war and destruction, wanting to deliver a message to the world. Music, in general, is the biggest drive for hope in the future. Music is a language of peace, of love. It is grasped by all kinds of audiences.”

The band feel that music is giving them renewed hope to stay in the country – and they are able to encourage other young people with their message too. “This land is the land of our forefathers and the land of our children’s future,” Farid adds. “Our music [makes people] understand that we will remain in this land.”

> You can hear the Melody singers for yourself at [opendoorsuk.org/iraq](http://opendoorsuk.org/iraq)

## PRAY

- Thank God for the Melody band who are bringing back joy and hope to many people
- That they will continue sharing a message of hope and peace to both Christian and Muslim audiences
- For young Christians in Iraq, that they will find joy and purpose in their lives.

BELOW The Melody singers share their faith through their music in Iraq



## | Middle East

### **Tuesday 1 August**

Church leaders in Iraq and Syria are doing their utmost to give hope to their youth and create opportunities for them. But they cannot do it alone. "We are facing a crisis. The existence of the church depends on our brothers and sisters in the Western world. We believe the church is one body, we are in this together. Will you support us?" Pray that more Christians in the UK and Ireland will stand in solidarity with Christians in the Middle East.

### **Wednesday 2 August**

One of Open Doors' most important investments in the church in Iraq and Syria is leadership training courses offered to leaders of all generations. Pray that those who attend these courses will develop into leaders who serve their churches, youth or children's groups in a healthy and biblical way.

### **Thursday 3 August - Iraq**

Open Doors partners run a Bible competition in Iraq to help young people understand the Bible more and apply it to their lives. "I got to know the characters from the Bible better," says Wiam, who took part. "I can apply the lessons in real life. I learned a lot that I can teach to others and give them hope." Pray that Wiam can pass on what he has learned to others.

### **Friday 4 August - Syria**

Pray for the families who lost their homes in the earthquake that hit the region in February. Give thanks that, through Open Doors local partners, the first houses have been restored. Many families are still benefiting from rent-support. Pray for stamina for our local church partners and that their support will give people hope and strength to stay in Syria.

### **Saturday 5 August - Syria**

Pray for the expansion of our team of local partners in Syria. Give thanks for successful recruitments and pray for wisdom and unity in the team as they seek to build God's kingdom in Syria.

### **Sunday 6 August - Lebanon**

Praise God for the several Christian radio and TV outlets in Lebanon that are able to broadcast the Word of God daily to the wider Arab world. Pray that the message of salvation will reach those who do not yet know the love of Jesus.



PICTURED  
Participants  
enjoy the Bible  
competition  
in Iraq



### **Monday 7 August - Lebanon**

Christian schools in Lebanon are facing many challenges. Parents struggle to pay their children's tuition fees, and schools often cannot pay for the teachers' salaries or the electricity. Ask the Lord to provide a way for these schools to remain open so children can receive a Christian education.

## | Sudan

### **Tuesday 8 August**

Pray for peace and stability in Sudan and the surrounding nations, in the wake of the conflict that broke out in April. Pray that diplomatic relations will be restored in the region, and for a return to talks aimed at restoring peaceful civilian rule.

### **Wednesday 9 August**

Pray for the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the conflict. Ask God to protect and equip aid organisations working to provide people with food, water and shelter.

### **Thursday 10 August**

Christians caught up in the conflict are particularly vulnerable. Most are day labourers and have no emergency funds to fall back on. This, combined with the fact that they are a minority group and usually marginalised, has left many at risk of starvation. Ask God to provide for all who do not know where their next meal will come from.

### **Friday 11 August**

Pray for strength and discernment for church

leaders as they lead their congregations at this uncertain time. Pray that they may encourage believers not to give in to fear but to take refuge in the Lord, our ever present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46).

## | Arabian Peninsula

### **Saturday 12 August**

Join us in praising God for all the Arabs He is drawing to Himself across this region. Ask the Lord to continue to build His church on the Arabian Peninsula and pray that individual believers will grow in faith and maturity.

### **Sunday 13 August**

As the church grows, persecution increases. Pray for Arab believers who are under pressure from work colleagues and their own families. Ask the Lord to give them the right words to say when they are harassed or questioned, and pray that their witness will draw others to Jesus.

### **Monday 14 August - Yemen**

Praise God that He is at work in Yemen. Please pray for divine connections between those who are genuinely seeking for Christ and online platforms that provide Bible-based discipleship classes.

### **Tuesday 15 August - Saudi Arabia**

Christians in Saudi Arabia are often restricted in the way they can meet and worship together. Ask the Lord to provide ways for believers to experience true fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

# A courageous man and his trusty old motorbike

Peto's journeys to unreachable villages in Laos are fraught with danger – just as his life has been ever since becoming a Christian.

After nine months of working without pay, Peto\* was given a document to sign. It said he had to forsake his faith or lose his job in the military. "I refused to sign the paper," he says. The decision cost Peto his job – and it's not the only way in which his courageous faith has been costly.

Peto and his wife became Christians when he was healed of severe toothache after a pastor prayed for him. Locals took unkindly to this, accusing the couple of betraying their culture. This

worsened as Peto began sharing his faith with others.

"I was no longer included in those who received projects or help provided by charities or private organisations," recalls Peto. "In another incident, the villagers killed all my farm animals. They brutally hit my ducks, chickens and goats with sticks until they died."

The persecution heightened when his wife got sick. Villagers forced them to make an offering to the village spirits, but the couple refused and instead

prayed for healing. His wife got better but the family were kicked out of the village.

## DAANGEROUS FAITH

It was at their new village that Peto got the job in the military. Despite knowing the consequences, he shared the gospel with colleagues, who were furious that he was following a 'foreign' religion. "They said they are going to shoot me if I won't recant my faith," says Peto. "I cried, but I was not afraid to get killed. I had faith in God. Even if I die, I'll be with God in heaven."

Word of Peto's faith reached his superiors, who withheld his pay before sacking him. Despite this, more doors have opened for him to take the gospel to unreachable villages whilst working full-time as a farmer.

"In my heart, I don't want to stop sharing the gospel," says Peto. "I want to share even if it gets me into trouble. I will continue to share the good

news even on the most difficult and dangerous roads with my trusty old motorbike."

It's a calling that supporters like you have contributed towards through the provision of leadership and discipleship programmes. "It's had so much impact on me," he reflects. "I know more about God, and I learned how to serve Him and His people better."

"Right now, I am an ordinary man – no prestigious military position, no name for myself – but I serve the one true God."

## PLEASE PRAY

- That those reached by Peto will grow in faith and courage
- That Peto will be kept safe in his ministry
- For the provision of land for Peto and local believers to build a church.

\*Name changed for security reasons



## | Vietnam

### **Wednesday 16 August**

Dieu's\* local community are repeatedly demanding that she renounce her Christian faith and have cut off her access to water. Despite this, she remains steadfast in her faith. Please pray that Dieu will have her water access restored and that God will protect her and her family.

### **Thursday 17 August**

Earlier this year, Open Doors partners ran leadership training for young people to equip them in church ministry. About 90 youth attended! Pray that the training will be effective, and for God's protection over the participants and course leaders.

### **Friday 18 August**

After attending training conducted by a local Open Doors partner, a group of believers are serving their community in creative ways. One participant said: "We will create a sports playground and a ministry to support people's livelihoods for the poorest people in the village." Pray that their efforts will bear fruit for God's kingdom.

### **Saturday 19 August**

Around 150 children whose parents are church leaders recently attended a camp for pastors' kids, which helped them understand their parents' ministry. They also got to meet other children who face the same pressures in life. Please pray that these children will grow in their faith and forge long-lasting friendships with one another.

## | Asia

### **Sunday 20 August – Kyrgyzstan**

Jena\* and her sister Relinda\* moved away after experiencing discrimination for their Christian faith in their village. Villagers stopped communicating with them, and people spread lies about them on social media. Pray that Jena and Relinda will find strength in the Lord and that they will know the right time to return to their village.

### **Monday 21 August – North Korea**

It's dangerous to teach young people the Word of God here, and leaders of secret churches are concerned about finding younger Christians to take over from them in the future. Pray for God's wisdom to help them prepare people of good heart and strong faith to succeed the current church leaders.

### **Tuesday 22 August – North Korea**

Rice is a vital crop in North Korea and is usually planted in June. In April, the government imported rice from China because their stocks ran out. Without rice, many people will go hungry, and even starve to death. Please pray that God will sustain the North Korean people and that the rice crops this year will not fail.

### **Wednesday 23 August – Nepal**

Most Christian persecution in Nepal comes from radical Hindu groups who want the country to return to Hinduism. Many persecuted believers are extremely poor and lack proper income sources. Ask

God to give them the strength to stand firm in their faith and provide for their needs.

### **Thursday 24 August – Indonesia**

During a recent visit, local Open Doors partners heard how, even amid opposition, many believers from Muslim backgrounds courageously share the good news of Jesus with their loved ones and neighbours. As a result, more and more people are being saved! Pray for God's wisdom as they continue to take God's love to their communities.

### **Friday 25 August – Indonesia**

Whether because of childhood trauma or conflicts with their parents, many young people find it difficult to forgive others. Open Doors partners are conducting youth camps for young believers to encourage them in their faith. Please pray that God will heal their hearts and help them to forgive those who have hurt them.

### **Saturday 26 August – Maldives**

There are no church buildings in the Maldives because it is considered a fully Muslim country, so immigrant believers can only gather in their homes to worship. Pray for unity among these house churches and that they would become channels for the gospel.

### **Sunday 27 August – Brunei**

According to local news, divorce cases in Brunei have risen from 409 in 2021 to 593 in the last year. Although Christians are facing increasing surveillance and monitoring, pray that they will model Christ's love in their marriages

and that many will be led to Jesus through their witness.

### **Monday 28 August – Brunei**

According to World Economics, 43.7% of people in Brunei are living in poverty. Muslims are often prioritised for support and aid over others from minority religions, including Christianity. Pray that God will grant courage to those who are fighting against religious discrimination.

### **Tuesday 29 August – Malaysia**

Local Open Doors partners are seeking to strengthen young people in East Malaysia by visiting different schools to help young people to understand their relationship with God. Pray that they will be able to deepen the faith of these teenagers, and for God's protection.

### **Wednesday 30 August – Sri Lanka**

Pastor Chandana\* recently began constructing a new church building but is being opposed by the local Buddhist-majority community. He's received death threats and the police are refusing to help. Pray for perseverance for Pastor Chandana as he serves God in this hostile environment.

### **Thursday 31 August – Sri Lanka**

In Colombo, one pastor has started up a football club to minister to poorer children in the area. Many have come to know Jesus already, and some are beginning to face opposition from their families. Pray that these teenagers will be given strength and courage to hold on to their faith.

\*Names changed for security reasons





## WHO CAN YOU INVITE TO HELP TACKLE PERSECUTION DURING THE WORLD CUP?

**The FIFA Women's World Cup kicks off this summer, offering a precious opportunity to raise prayer for Christians facing persecution because five of the participating countries are on the World Watch List.**

These are Nigeria, China, Colombia, Vietnam and Morocco, and we've put together a wall chart to fill in the scores and track the tournament, whilst engaging with stories, facts and prayer requests from the five countries to inspire and inform your prayers.

"You've helped open the eyes of this little five-year-old," said Aaron, father of Judah,

who used a similar resource during last year's men's World Cup. "There has been genuine heartache for those who can't read their Bibles like he can, but also such earnest prayer."

The wall chart is for all ages and is an ideal resource to introduce your family, friends, youth group or church to our persecuted family. Order free copies today at [opendoorsuk.org/worldcup2023](https://opendoorsuk.org/worldcup2023)



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