

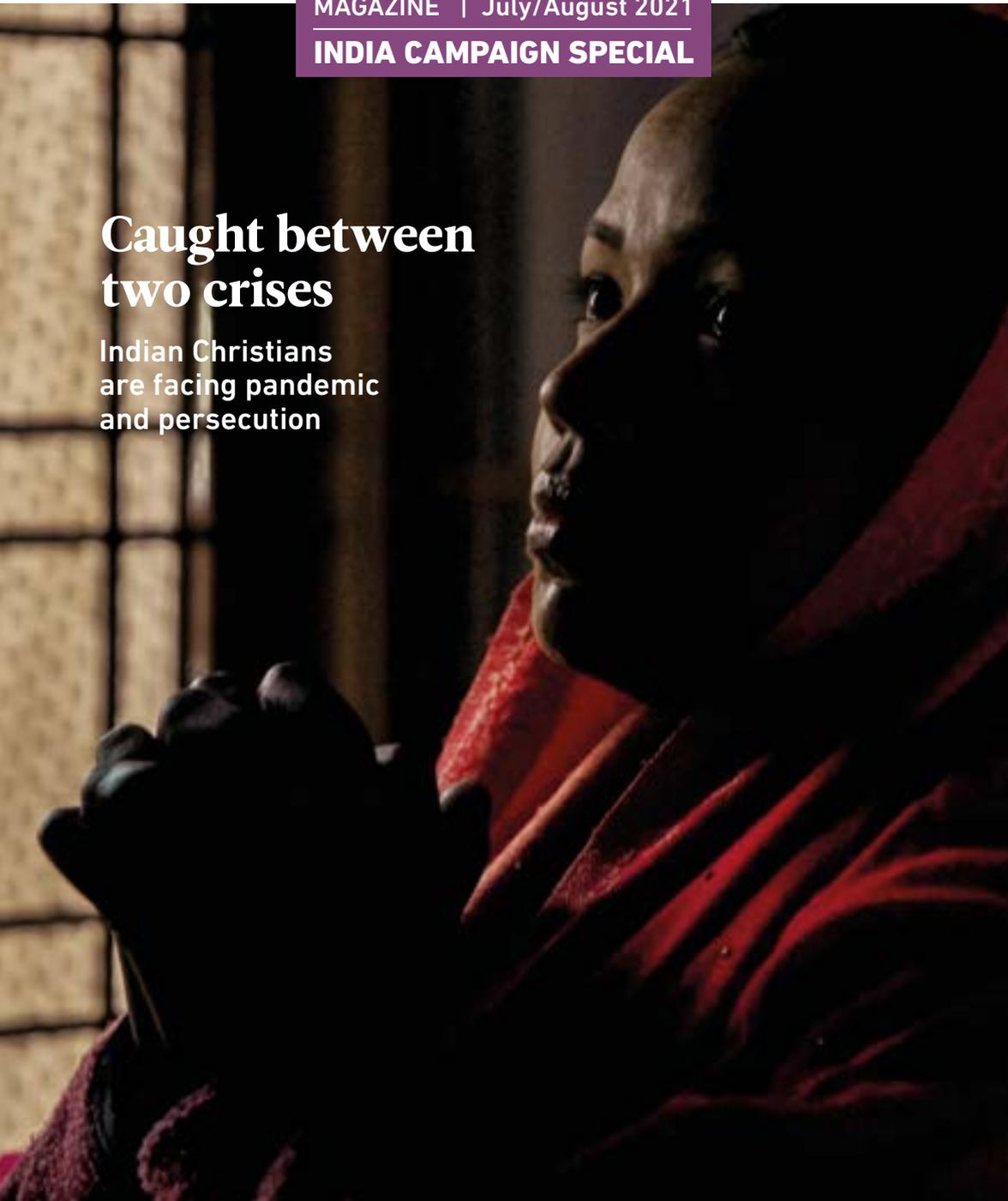
Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | July/August 2021

INDIA CAMPAIGN SPECIAL

Caught between two crises

Indian Christians
are facing pandemic
and persecution





Open Doors
STANDING STRONG
together

BOOK TODAY

ANNUAL GATHERING ONLINE
UNITE, PRAY AND GROW WITH YOUR PERSECUTED CHURCH FAMILY

This September, join Standing Strong Together online – the annual event for Open Doors supporters where you can worship, pray and hear amazing stories of courageous faith!

SATURDAY
25 SEPTEMBER 2021 | 8PM

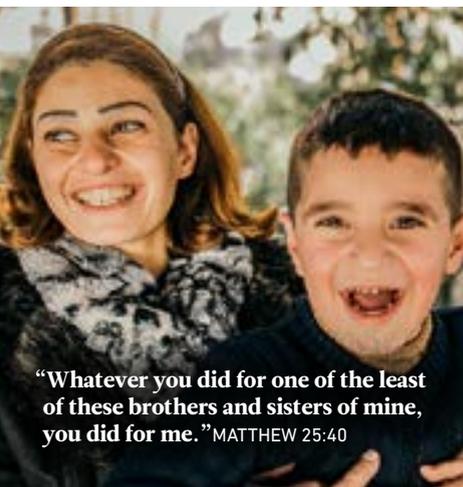
Book your place today at opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong

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 a Will for FREE using our partner *Farewill*.

To find out more go to opendoorsuk.org/legacy or phone **01993 777338**.



“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” MATTHEW 25:40



Open Doors
STANDING STRONG LIVE
Prayer without borders
1 JULY | 8.15PM

The church in India is struck down, but not destroyed. It's time to act. In Open Doors' July webinar, you can hear about the two crises facing the Indian church and join in praying for our brothers and sisters who, though persecuted, are not abandoned.

Find out more and register today at opendoorsuk.org

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 image:
Vinita (name changed) was badly beaten by Hindu extremists, but your support has helped her stand strong

Letter from Henrietta

India in crisis

“Persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” 2 CORINTHIANS 4:9

Hindu extremists have said they wish to eradicate Christianity from India. There is an unprecedented urgency for us to act and pray. Over the next months, the survival of the Indian church is at stake.

Here in the UK and Ireland, we are gradually emerging from the worst of the Covid crisis – maybe even beginning to think about ‘getting back to normal’. But that certainly isn’t true for our brothers and sisters in India.

Even without the horror of the pandemic, the ‘normal’ that Indian Christians face is filled with persecution, fuelled by false anti-Christian propaganda. Our family are facing two appalling crises.

We know this is a spiritual battle and we must fight it with spiritual weapons – we need the Lord to intervene powerfully. Yet the world remains largely ignorant of the severity of violence and discrimination facing Christians in India – you can find out how to sound the alarm in the UK and Ireland on p11.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters need to know they are not forgotten – particularly during this pandemic. I am so grateful for the faith of courageous believers like Vinita (p6) who continue to cling to Jesus. It’s a privilege to stand with them.

You’ve certainly stood with your worldwide Christian family this past year. Despite the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, your incredible response has kept hope alive for the persecuted church – meaning Open Doors partners can answer the calls for urgent help caused by Covid-19, while still distributing Bibles, providing training and counselling, making business loans and much more. You can see the impact of your support in the annual review (p12). None of Open Doors’ work would be possible without you. Thank you so much!



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

P.S. We are calling for a month of prayer for India and I very much hope you will join me and Eddie Lyle as we launch it with an evening webinar on 1 July – see p2 for more details

World Watch News

IRAN Couple told to report to prison for involvement in house church

Your prayers remain urgently needed for Homayoun Zhavesh and his wife Sara Ahmadi (PICTURED RIGHT) from Iran: they have been told to submit themselves to Tehran's notorious Evin Prison.

The married couple are both Iranian Christians from a Muslim background and were arrested for involvement in a house church. The arrest of converts is sadly not uncommon in Iran, but what makes this

case more troubling is that Homayoun is suffering from advanced Parkinson's disease. Homayoun has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment, with Sara given eight years.

In March, the couple's lawyer filed for a retrial with the Supreme Court, but they've yet to hear whether or not this retrial will go ahead. A possible alternative is that the Supreme Court will allow Homayoun to pay a fine rather than go to



prison, on account of his poor health – though that would still mean Sara would go to prison, and Homayoun would be left without his primary carer.

Please continue praying for our Iranian brother and sister as they wait for developments in this case – pray that they will know God's powerful peace and will not have to go to prison.

INDONESIA

Third terror attack in six months kills four believers



Islamic extremists have murdered four Christian men from Kalimago village in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The attack, in mid-May, is believed to have been carried out by members of the terrorist group East Indonesia Mujahidin (MIT), which has links to so-called Islamic State.

It's the third terrorist attack on believers in Indonesia in six months. In March 2021, suicide bombers targeted a church in Makassar; thankfully, no one was killed. However, in November 2020, four

believers were murdered in a brutal attack in Sigi; this is close to where the latest incident occurred and the perpetrators are again believed to have been MIT.

"Pray for the peace of God to cover this area," shares Ari*, an Open Doors local partner. "Fear and intimidation are trying to take over people's hearts, but God's power is more powerful."

Ari and his team visited the area to provide practical, emotional and spiritual support. "In this situation, we are

not fighting alone, we got help from you," a local pastor told to the team. "We do experience the presence of Open Doors in this place, side by side with us, to feel the burden we feel."

BELOW Pastor Ari said those he visited 'were grateful for the care shown by believers all around the world'



CAMEROON "You brought us these gifts"

Martha (BELOW) from north Cameroon has been a widow for seven years. Her husband was tragically murdered by suspected Boko Haram militants who are active in the area. Since then, the 42-year-old has been responsible for their six children plus three stepchildren.

"God has caused the love that you Christians from faraway have for us."

Sadly, even though custom dictates that families take care of their widows, Martha has not received any such support – and Covid-19 has only

exacerbated the problem. "Last night, I asked myself: 'What will we eat tomorrow? How can I feed my children?'" she shares. The next day, thanks to your timely intervention, the family received rice, maize, salt, cooking oil and washing soap, as well as an envelope with cash for other essentials.

"God has caused the love that you Christians from faraway have for us," Martha says. "That is why you brought us these gifts, which is very special."

Your support has ensured almost 400 vulnerable families in north Cameroon have been reached with vital aid. "A widow is a woman who is poor, but her God is there," shares Mariam, another beneficiary. "And indeed, it is God who thought of us, the widows. Thank you for helping us." Others helped included pastors whose income has suffered due to not receiving tithes whilst churches have been unable to gather.



SAUDI ARABIA Believer given enormous fine under fabricated charge

A Christian in Saudi Arabia has been fined 300,000 SAR (around £56,000) following false accusations by his wider family who are angry that he helped his sister-in-law flee the country because of persecution.

In the eyes of many in Saudi society, Adam* and his sister-in-law have committed one of the biggest sins a Muslim can commit – leaving Islam. With his sister-in-law's life in danger, Adam helped her flee the country.

*names changed for security reasons

But it came at a cost to Adam, who was falsely accused of stealing money from the family business. In April, a judge saw that the case was a set up and acquitted Adam. However, given the family's influence and many court officials wanting to help the family punish a Christian, the case was reopened. In June, Adam was found guilty.

Adam is appealing the verdict. Please pray that he will be granted favour in this.



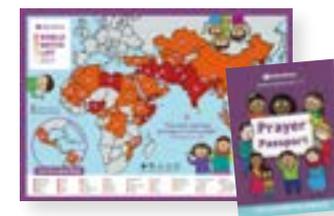
Eirene's 100-mile cycle for the persecuted church

Six-year-old Eirene (ABOVE) was praying with her World Watch List children's map when she had a bold idea.

Saddened that there are Christians suffering for their faith, including facing imprisonment and separation from families, Eirene set herself a challenge to help them: cycle 100 miles by the end of the summer term.

Eirene's target was £200 but already she has smashed it. At the time of writing, Eirene has raised £426, having so far cycled just under 25 miles. Well done, Eirene, we are cheering you on!

Would you like to introduce your children to Open Doors' World Watch List? Head to opendoorsuk.org/resources to order from our free selection of children's resources.



For the latest news and stories of courageous faith, visit opendoorsuk.org

FOR INDIAN CHRISTIANS, COVID-19 IS ONLY HALF THE STORY

When Vinita* chose to follow Jesus, she knew it was a risk. Coming from a Hindu background in India, she anticipated resistance – but nothing as brutal as the attack she suffered.

FINDING PEACE

Finding faith in Jesus made a big difference to Vinita's life. "Before coming to the Lord, I had a lot of troubles," she says. "When I came to the Lord, I had a peace of mind that nobody else offered." Her husband and sister Isha* also decided to follow Christ, after seeing the change in Vinita's life.

But not everybody responded so well. Hindu extremists have vowed to wipe out Christians and other non-Hindus in India by

the end of 2021, and Christians from Hindu backgrounds are particularly targeted – often by their own family and community. When Vinita tried to share the peace she had found in Christ with others, she was met with opposition and threats.

"I tried to share the gospel to many, but they did not listen. They spoke badly to me, saying, 'You are worshipping a foreign God instead of our gods and goddesses.'" One of the lies perpetuated by Hindu extremist

groups in India is that Christians aren't 'proper' Indians, and that converts have betrayed their nationality.

But Vinita persisted: "I never gave up – my job was to share the Word of God."

A VIOLENT ATTACK

One day, the opposition to Vinita and her family became much more extreme.

"My sister was returning from work when my neighbours

LEFT Vinita was badly beaten in her home by Hindu extremists, and her livelihood is suffering during Covid-19

started a fight with her," says Vinita. "I went to rescue her – and they hit me too."

When Vinita and Isha went to the police, they found that their persecutors had already lodged a complaint – alleging that Vinita and Isha had been the real attackers. "The police did not help us because the attackers had already bribed them."

The sisters' injuries weren't serious, but Vinita and Isha were shaken and anxious. They called their pastor, and he and his wife Preetha* came to pray with them.

When the attackers heard that a pastor had come, they decided to launch a more violent and sustained assault. They burst into the house, calling "Where are the Christians? We don't want Christians here!"

"Eight or nine men from the neighbourhood barged into the house," remembers Vinita. "They were armed with rods in their hands. For almost 30 minutes they were beating us. They were stamping on us and hitting us. We were falling down and they would pick us up again, and continue the attack."

"I felt that today we would not be spared."

This horrific violence is symptomatic of the crisis facing Indian Christians across the country. They are attacked, abused, discriminated against, rejected – all because of their faith. Sometimes believers are even murdered – as Vinita could have been, if she hadn't managed to escape.

"My life was saved as I rushed into my neighbour's house. They were shouting, 'Bring her out!' But God protected me and my life was spared. I felt His

presence. If not for God, we would be dead."

DENIED TREATMENT

Somehow, everyone survived the brutal attack – though they were badly hurt. "My head was seriously injured, and I have deep injuries near my hip and on my shoulders," says Vinita. "My sister sustained serious head injuries."

"I felt that today we would not be spared"

VINITA

Worst affected was Preetha, the pastor's wife. When one of the men went to hit her with a metal rod, she lifted her hand to protect herself – it was almost cut in half. She also had a broken leg and other internal injuries. And things got worse still: "When we were admitted to the hospital, we could not receive treatment because there was pressure from the attackers," says Vinita.

"This is very common in India," shares Pastor Samuel*, a local Open Doors partner. "Most often the hospital denies medical help. And the police take a lot of time in registering their cases. These people suffer a lot."

"Preetha's situation was very serious," adds Vinita. "I prayed, 'Father, you alone show your power and heal us.'"

HELP FROM OPEN DOORS PARTNERS

God answered Vinita's prayers, though perhaps not in the way she expected. Thanks to your support and prayers, a local Open Doors partner was able to take Preetha and Vinita to a different hospital and pay for their treatment.

Preetha puts it simply: "Had Open Doors partners not helped us, I would have died."

Open Doors partners are also able to offer legal support to the women, and provide new equipment for Vinita's business, which was ransacked and vandalised in the attack.

Throughout it all, the women's faith has stayed firm. "God is always with me," says Preetha – she's drawn comfort from Isaiah 49:15, which reads, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

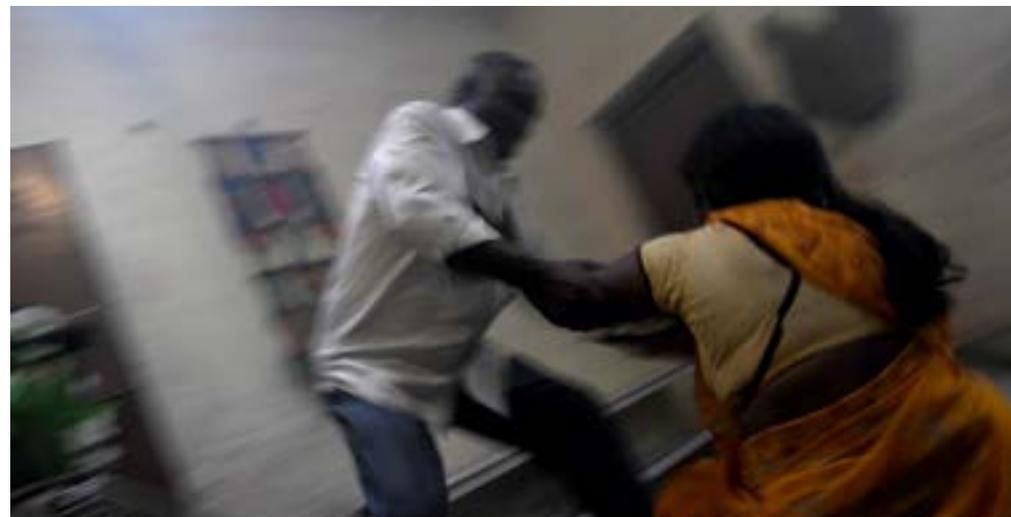
Vinita agrees: "I have never thought of leaving God, because God alone has safeguarded us and helped us. Remain in Christ Jesus who sustains us and He will bless you. Peace in Christ is found nowhere else."

Amazingly, she has also forgiven her attackers. "When Jesus left this world, He said, 'Father, these people do not know what they are doing. Forgive them.' From this verse, I learn to forgive my enemies. And I pray that the attackers have a change of heart."

THANK YOU!

Preetha and Vinita are both deeply grateful to God – and to Open Doors supporters, whom He used to bring them crucial medical care and comfort. "I am thankful to God for blessing us immensely," says Vinita. "And to those people who have helped me, I would like to give thanks."

"Thank you, not just to God but also to His people who have helped us," echoes Preetha. "Yes, I have seen God's favour as well as the favour of God's people. You helped, thinking of me as your own."



ABOVE Hindu extremists have vowed to eradicate non-Hindus in India (illustrative image)

BELOW Preetha was denied medical treatment - just because of her faith

HOW IS COVID-19 AFFECTING CHRISTIANS IN INDIA?

Aman* is an Open Doors partner in India. Here is his perspective on India and the pandemic. Please keep praying for him and all local partners, and all the persecuted Christians they are serving.

When the pandemic began, we could see that poor people were on the verge of starvation. So – with your support – we started helping the people with ready-made food and groceries. The situation now is critical. We are following all protocols and safety precautions as much as possible.

Usha is one example. She and her family are daily wage workers, dependent on work that isn't now available. Even before Covid-19, Usha faced persecution. When employers came to know about her faith, they'd pay her less and abuse her for 'abandoning' her traditional faith.*

Then Usha was refused government aid during the lockdowns, because of her faith. This happened to many believers. There were no such directives from the government, but this was practised at the local level by people who had the authority to distribute food. Everyone was taunting Usha, saying, "Your God is not helping you, but if you renounce your faith then we will help you."

But Usha is very firm in her faith and loves God with her whole heart. She waits upon her Lord for all her needs. And, thanks to Open Doors supporters, our team was able to collect 200kg of rice and distribute it



Your gifts and prayers mean Usha can receive vital Covid relief aid

among her family and eight other Christian families she knew. We have been back six times.

Usha expressed her heartfelt gratitude towards us: "Thank you Jesus for sending your people to our aid and giving us provision miraculously."

The people we meet – like Usha – are discouraged and anxious regarding the pandemic situation, but they are looking to the Lord for answers. When we reach them with help, that helps their faith. They are very happy and are praising God and thanking us again and again.

Your prayers and support are ensuring these women, and many like them, are not just surviving but have hope for the future. You're showing them that they aren't forgotten by their global church family.

CORONAVIRUS AND THE FUTURE

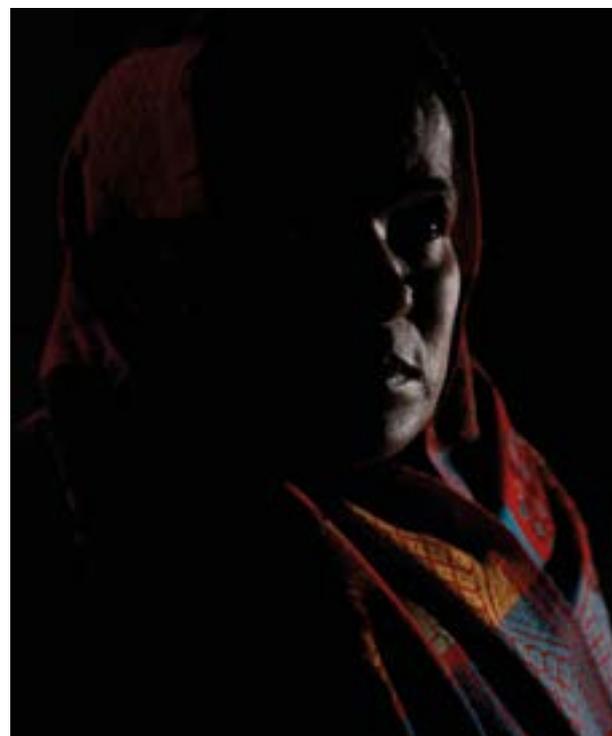
That solidarity is more important than ever during the pandemic (ABOVE). Coronavirus

is having a terrible impact across India, and the effects are likely to be long-lasting. For Christians, this crisis is made worse by the discrimination they already face every day.

Vinita's business is suffering, and her husband lost his job due to the pandemic. People were already afraid to come, because of the violence, and the pandemic is making this

even worse. "When quarantine started, our work came to a standstill," she says. "We had no money and no food. I used to pray, 'O Lord, please bless us so that we can afford some food for survival.' I also pray for those brothers and sisters who are suffering like us."

Open Doors partners are helping the family, but they still face persecution from their



Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors partners are supporting Preetha spiritually and financially

community: "Even now they threaten us and say, 'We will not let you stay here.' They say they will drive us out and make us beg. Pray that the threats will stop, and that we will be strong in faith."

"You helped me, thinking of me as your own"

PREETHA

It's unthinkable that, in the world's largest democracy, Hindu extremists have set out to destroy the church. Their violence against believers like Vinita and Preetha hasn't stopped during the pandemic – it's only got worse. But when the pandemic stops, will the church in India have survived?

By giving, praying and acting, you can help ensure it does.

PLEASE GIVE

You can make a gift at opendoorsuk.org

- **Every £21** could equip four people to train others in their legal rights and how to survive persecution
- **Every £45** could help a believer set up a business so they can become self-sufficient
- **Every £60** could give urgent Covid relief aid and help with medical costs to a victim of violence or a believer who has lost their livelihood through the pandemic.

PLEASE PRAY

- For Vinita and Preetha to heal from their injuries and trauma
- That the church in India will not just survive these two crises, but become stronger
- That Open Doors partners in India would be able to reach those most in need of support.

You can also find a dedicated month of prayer for Indian Christians in your prayer diary.

PLEASE ACT

The Indian church is asking Open Doors globally to sound the alarm on anti-Christian propaganda. Will you answer their call and help ensure the UK Government actively responds to the crises faced by our Indian church family, like Vinita and Preetha?

- **WATCH** #StandForTruthIndia videos showing the situation Indian Christians are facing. Find them on Open Doors' social media channels, or follow the QR code



- **SHARE** the videos on your social media accounts, tagging Nigel Adams MP (Minister for Asia) and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
- **POST** a picture of yourself holding #StandForTruthIndia on 15 August – Indian Independence Day.

*names changed for security reasons



Extraordinary year Extraordinary generosity



“Our friends, we want you to know what God’s grace has accomplished in the churches... They have been severely tested by the troubles they went through; but their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in their giving...” 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-2 GNB

2020 was a truly extraordinary year for all of us. The Covid-19 pandemic that has swept the globe has changed all our lives – but our persecuted family have been hit particularly hard, with many Christians finding themselves last in line for government aid and others facing increased violence and pressure during lockdown.

So I am deeply grateful for the extraordinary generosity you have shown in response to this latest crisis facing our persecuted family. Despite the economic challenges presented by Covid restrictions, income for the year grew by an incredible 32 per cent, enabling our field teams to bring emergency Covid aid to vulnerable believers with no other means of support, while continuing to strengthen believers for whom persecution and discrimination are simply a daily reality.

Thank you too for standing with our persecuted family in prayer and advocacy. The

launch of the 2020 World Watch List was once again a highlight of the year, with 122 MPs attending the parliamentary launch to hear first-hand from persecuted believers.

Your sacrificial commitment to the persecuted church during this most challenging of years has been amazing to see, and is a fitting testimony to the extraordinary God whom we serve. As you read this annual review, I pray that you will be encouraged to see how you are helping the church around the world to stand strong in the face of incredible challenges, and strengthened to follow the example of those who continue to courageously share Jesus no matter the cost.

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

Thank you!

By praying, giving and speaking out, you are helping your persecuted family around the world to stand strong, defy persecution and share Jesus, no matter the cost.

2020 highlights

£16.8 million

was donated in support of the persecuted church

Over 102,000

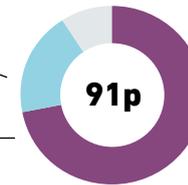
people prayed regularly for the persecuted church

122 MPs

attended the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List

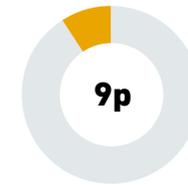
For every £1 you gave...

19p raised prayer, advocacy and awareness for persecuted Christians



went to supporting persecuted Christians

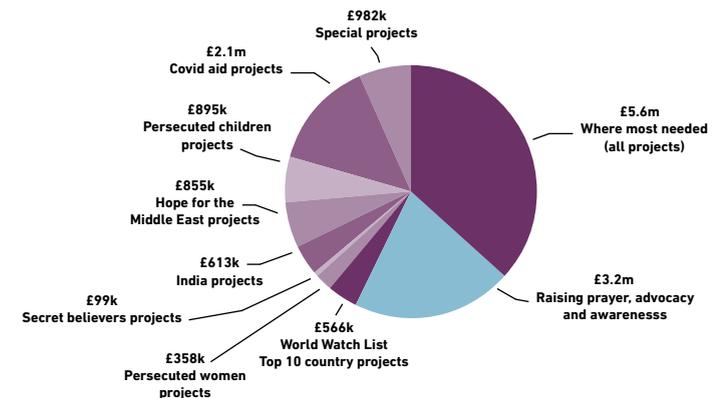
72p funded vital projects to strengthen persecuted Christians worldwide



went to our running and operational costs

How we used your donations to support persecuted Christians

Visit opendoorsuk.org/annualreview for more detail on this breakdown



The above figures are correct at time of print and subject to final audit. If you would like to receive a copy of the audited financial statements, they are available on request from: Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney, OX29 6WG.

Coronavirus crisis update

“God opened the doors miraculously and used you to do the impossible.” FIELD WORKER, ASIA

For many persecuted Christians, the Covid pandemic has been devastating. But your incredible response to our Coronavirus crisis appeal has made a life-changing difference, enabling Open Doors partners on the ground to reach families in urgent need of food and aid. Through the Open Doors network, more than half a million persecuted Christians received vital help when they needed it most. Thank you.

Over 500,000

persecuted Christians received emergency Covid relief in 2020, thanks to you



Rose, with her daughters Esther and Joy. Through your gifts, Rose has opened a small business

In Africa...

30,000

Christian families received emergency Covid relief

Violence against Christians actually increased in sub-Saharan Africa as Islamic militants exploited Covid restrictions to attack the church. But your support has helped Christians facing severe persecution and poverty caused by the pandemic lockdowns.

When Covid hit her community in Nigeria, Rose was still mourning her husband, Pastor Matthew, who was killed by Fulani militants. Despite having two children and a third on the way, Rose was

left out when the government announced food aid in their area. But with your help, Open Doors partners provided Rose and her daughters with food aid and money to start a business.

Sadly, Rose's baby, Patience, did not survive. But despite all she has been through, Rose continues to testify to God's faithfulness to her.

“When Patience died, I thought my in-laws would rally around me, but nobody came,” she says. “From my husband's death to my baby's delivery, you have been there for me. I want to say thank you. There is nothing I can say or give that is greater than thank you.

“This business has made me self-reliant. I no longer wait for help from people, but with



Praveen and Shanti can run their shop again, thanks to your support



Thanks to your generosity, Pastor George's church has helped 400 families through the crisis

hard work and God's blessing, I have been able to pay my daughter's school fees and buy the essentials to take care of my children. I no longer see myself as a widow because God is truly my husband, and I have a new family in you.”

In Asia...

283,000

Christians received vital Covid aid

Across Asia, Christians, many of whom are daily wage labourers, found themselves unemployed and last in line for food and aid. But thanks to your generosity and prayers, Christians got life-saving support when they needed it the most.

In India, Open Doors local partner Rajesh* has been providing vital food aid to believers who lost their jobs during lockdown.

“When we reached them with food packages, many started crying and saying

it was the answer to their prayers,” he says. “They thanked the Lord, saying, ‘You are sent by the Lord to us in these crucial times, and this has strengthened our faith because the Lord has answered our prayers.’”

Praveen* and his wife Shanti* were disinherited by their family when they became Christians. They set up their own shop but it didn't make a profit, and when the pandemic arrived, it was a struggle to even put food on the table.

“Your organisation has come to our help and provided materials to re-stock the shop,” says Praveen. “Now the shop is running well and is a stable income source for our family. We can pay our house rent without a struggle and meet all our basic needs. Today we have customers coming to the shop and we are able to re-stock the groceries too – all because of your help at the right time.

“I pray that will God bless you all abundantly, as my family has been blessed. My deepest and warm gratitude for each one of you.”

In the Middle East...

Nearly 200,000

believers were given Covid relief aid

For many Christians in the Middle East, the Covid crisis has come on top of years of war and persecution.

Pastor George's community in Qamishli, Syria, has been hit hard by the virus. “Many people, including my wife, tested positive,” he says, “also friends and family.”

But with your support, Pastor George is providing vital support for many vulnerable believers impacted by Covid lockdowns, through the Centre of Hope in his church.

“In partnership with you we support displaced and needy people,” he says. “We are distributing around 150 to 200 food packages per month. We support also around 40 to 50 people with medical aid. When possible, we help them

financially too. We've helped between 350 to 400 different families. This allowed us to meet many people and tell them about Jesus."

Church activities have increasingly been limited by Covid restrictions, so Pastor George turned to social media to connect with people. Here, too, he is seeing God at work.

"We have witnessed many people coming to Jesus and getting saved," he shares. "We have WhatsApp prayer groups, but also individually people are praying. It is a chance for people to return to Jesus. Everything works out for the good of those who love God."

In the UK...

As the pandemic unfolded, we launched #TheLastInLine campaign to highlight the



Over 4,000 supporters took action in #TheLastInLine campaign

discrimination persecuted Christians are facing in the distribution of Covid aid. Over 4,000 supporters wrote to their MPs or took a photo of themselves with a bowl and cross to represent this discrimination.

As a result, 38 MPs took direct action by either writing to the Secretary of State for International Development, or submitting

written questions to the Minister, or tabling an early day motion. Many other MPs also replied to supporters, showing their commitment to the issues raised. Thank you for continuing to ensure those in power are challenged to use their influence to bring positive change for our persecuted family.

Persecution hasn't stopped because of the Covid crisis – and neither have we

Despite the increased challenges presented by restrictions on travel and in-person gatherings, your support has enabled Open Doors partners around the world to find ways to continue to strengthen Christians facing persecution, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Seeing Change for persecuted women

Open Doors has been supporting Abebu in Ethiopia ever since her husband was murdered for his faith in 2013.

For many women in Africa, being widowed leads to social exclusion and poverty. But you have changed Abebu's story. Your support has provided her and her eight children with clothing, trauma care, medical help, and funds to help Abebu start her own business. When Covid-19 struck, you enabled us to step in once again, providing money for them to buy food.

"I was scared," Abebu shares. "If I had not received your financial help, my children could have died of starvation." Now Abebu is back on her feet

and working harder than ever. With your support, she has grown into an avid farmer and entrepreneur. She has taken out a loan, buying livestock to rear, and growing tree seedlings to sell.

And in a remarkable answer to prayer, her husband's murderer has given his life to Jesus! Amazingly, Abebu has forgiven him, saying, "We have no revenge. We have no resentment."

The family's faith remains strong. "We are worshipping and praising God together,"



Your support has changed Abebu's story

Abebu shares. "My children are well and healthy. They are pursuing their education.

"To my family who has supported me, who prayed to God on our behalf: we would not be here and would not have anything without you. May God bless those who are concerned for us."

1,102,021

persecuted women and girls received vital support in 2020.

Bringing comfort and joy to persecuted children

Daniela lost her father, Pastor Plinio, when he was murdered by a drug cartel in Colombia. Open Doors has come alongside Daniela and her brother, Sebastián, providing them with trauma care and fellowship at the Children's Centre. And thanks to your incredible response to our Christmas appeal, Open



Daniela and her brother Sebastián

Doors has continued to walk with Daniela and her family, providing ongoing trauma support and helping them to resettle in a safer area. During a recent visit from the Open Doors team, Daniela wrote this letter, thanking you for making this possible:

I thank God and each one of you for everything you have done for me, my brother Sebastián, and my mother Alba.

My family and I are very happy, despite everything we have lived through. Although sometimes we have sad days, we support each other as a family. There are days when we remember our dad, but I'm happy to know that he's in a better place.

Last year, I was at the Children's Centre to celebrate Christmas. My family and I felt good there. The people welcomed us so well there, it was an honor to share with everyone, to know that they care and pray, not only for us, but for children all over the world.

This year we received help to live in a new house. I like the

house because it's comfortable and simple.

I have no words to express my gratitude to everyone who prays for us. I want to say to those who suffer persecution that our God is faithful and helps us at all times.

208,626

persecuted children received practical and spiritual support in 2020.

Help us reach more believers in 2021

Thank you so much for letting your persecuted family know they are not alone. In 2021, we aim to help significantly more believers who are facing persecution, poverty and the fall-out of the pandemic. You can make a gift to our ongoing covid relief work in India at opendoorsuk.org or by using the response device enclosed with your magazine. Thank you!

*names changed for security reasons



STANDING STRONG

Together



UNITE, PRAY AND GROW WITH YOUR PERSECUTED CHURCH FAMILY

You are invited to join Open Doors' annual gathering for supporters as we come together with our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world for an amazing evening of worship, prayer and stories of courageous faith! In this live, online event, you will hear speakers from India and the Middle East as they share how God is working in and through the persecuted church. Together we will worship and pray for God's kingdom to come.

Sabita*, an Open Doors local partner from India, is witnessing how your prayers and support are making a huge difference to the church there.

"Many people are experiencing deliverance, they are receiving healing and coming to the Lord, and this is all happening just because of your prayers. The people who are persecuted are standing strong because of your prayers and support. Thank you so much. Continue to pray for us, continue to give us your support. Thank you."

With lockdown restrictions easing, why not invite others to watch together? Churches, small groups – even friends and family – will hear how you are helping to keep hope alive in some of the darkest places and sustaining the church facing persecution. There will also be a live Q&A so you can ask your questions in real time.

"It's so encouraging to hear how Christians are standing together despite their desperate circumstances."

ATTENDEE,
STANDING STRONG 2020

As you have blessed the persecuted church, come and be encouraged in your own faith!

STANDING STRONG: BRAVE FAITH ONLINE YOUTH GATHERING

This year, for the first time ever, Open Doors Youth are hosting Standing Strong for young people and youth groups, bringing the passion and brave faith of the persecuted church straight to their screens – along with special guests and fun challenges.

"The night will get darker before day comes. We expect more violence and destruction before things get better. Please pray for us."

MIDDLE EASTERN
SECRET BELIEVER

It's going to be 45 minutes packed with inspiring stories from Christians around the world who know that, despite threats, violence, arrest, intimidation and prison, following Jesus is more than worth it.

Young people will be challenged as they learn about those who are willing to give everything to follow Jesus - and also inspired by understanding that their actions and prayers can make a significant impact as they step out in faith themselves.

You will also be the first to hear about *Brave Faith*: a brand-new discipleship resource for young people! To book your ticket, go to opendoorsyouth.org.

REGISTER TODAY FOR STANDING STRONG

Standing Strong Together

Saturday 25 September
8pm

Standing Strong youth event

Friday 24 September
7.15pm

And don't forget to invite others! Scan the QR code to book your place or go online at opendoorsuk.org.



LEFT Rebekah (FAR RIGHT) and her family have stayed strong, with your support and prayers, since facing injury and grief in the Easter 2019 church bombings in Sri Lanka

AMONG THE ASHES

LEARNING LAMENT WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

- | Inspirational, powerful film featuring stories from India, North Korea and Iraq |
- | Interactive prayer ideas to help you and your church support those 'among the ashes' |
- | Great for online talks or church services |
- | Can be used as a stand alone prayer evening or small group meeting |

What do you do when it all falls apart?

What do you do when everything gets taken away; when all that you have worked so hard to build gets shut down?

Or, worse, becomes nothing more than a load of ruins and a handful of ash?



Those are the questions which open *Among the Ashes* – a new film and prayer resource for churches from Open Doors.

Filmed in an abandoned church in South Wales, *Among the Ashes* is a beautiful, evocative and inspiring film. It combines biblical reflection with stories from the persecuted church, to explore how the biblical principle of lament can bring us hope and comfort, even in the darkest situations.

In the film, Ron Boyd-Macmillan (PICTURED) – who has worked with Open Doors for over 35 years – unpacks what he calls the four movements of lament: presence, honesty, promise and reply.

“Lament,” he says, “is first about getting into the presence of God, understanding that He is not absent. Then it’s about expressing honestly how we feel, standing on God’s promises and, crucially, waiting for a reply.”

MORE THAN A FILM

“Every day, around the world, persecuted Christians find themselves standing in the ruins and asking, ‘Where did God go?’” says Ron. “We may not share their exact experiences. But suffering and loss is something that we will all share at some point in our lives.”

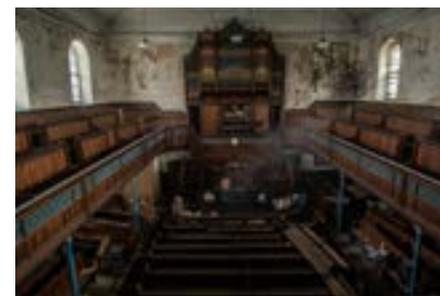
These issues have taken on a special resonance for Christians in the UK and Ireland over the past year, as we have all struggled through such an unparalleled period of loss and anxiety.

- your prayer meetings
- your small group
- a special event

NO SHAME

However you use the film, we pray it will connect your church with the persecuted church – and that you will be encouraged by the film’s message of hope and love.

“What we learn from the stories of the persecuted church,” says Ron, “indeed, what we learn from the Bible itself, is that it’s no shame to find ourselves in the ruins.”



“Because in the ruins we have the opportunity to encounter a different God than the one we’d imagined.”

“And among the ashes we discover the revolutionary power of lament.”

That’s why *Among the Ashes* is more than just a film. You’ll also be able to access online prayer resources and responses which follow the four ‘movements’, helping Christians to pray for Christians who are struggling with loss and hardship – not only in the persecuted church, but all around us.

You can use the film in many different church contexts:

- during your church service (online or in-person)

if you’re a church or small group leader who would like to use *Among the Ashes* for prayer and discussion in your own context, visit the redesigned churches area of our website by visiting opendoorsuk.org/churches. Here you will get access to the film and many other church related resources and information.



GOING THE EXTRA MILE FROM LONDON TO PYONGYANG

Do you know the distance from London to Pyongyang in North Korea? A group of Open Doors fundraisers can tell you – because they've travelled it.

Some ideas really go the distance – quite literally.

It was September 2020 when Doug from Berkshire began devising a fundraising activity based on the belief that, as he puts it, 'no distance would be too far, no lockdown too tight, to stop us reaching even the most closed nations'.

A JOURNEY TO NORTH KOREA
Before long, over 40 people had joined Doug in 'Going the Extra Mile' – a commitment to travel between them 7,268 miles, which is the distance from London to Pyongyang in North Korea.

The journey – which started on Valentine's Day and finished on 7 May – was completed remotely from people's local surroundings. Participants clocked up the miles by

running, cycling, skiing, walking, swimming, skating and even hopping.

"The urgency to help became apparent, beginning with prayer and following with action" – SANDY

"The lack of freedom in North Korea is unlike any other nation," Doug explains. "To help remember an often-forgotten nation, and to embrace the place where persecution ranks highest, we decided to make North Korea the country we will 'journey' towards."

'EXHILARATING' CHALLENGE
At the time of writing, the group have raised over £6,500, with funds going towards helping Christians

from the ten countries where it's most dangerous to follow Jesus, including North Korea which is number 1 on the World Watch List.

"It was exhilarating," said Helen, who took part. "It gave my running more purpose". Nick agrees, adding, "It was great getting to know such a wonderful group of Christians from different countries who share my passion for North Korean Christians."

Such has been its success that the group – who are in regular contact over WhatsApp and Zoom – are considering how to continue the challenge. "God has placed on my heart the need to continue the journey," Doug shares. "The next chapter is about to begin!"

LEFT TO RIGHT Sandy enjoyed walking in beautiful surroundings whilst praying for North Korean Christians; other participants included Olav and his wife; Christina has been cycling her 'extra' miles



CORRIE FROM CHESHIRE – RUNNING AND CYCLING

What inspired you to 'Go the Extra Mile'?

I feel so passionate about supporting our North Korean brothers and sisters, and I enjoy running and cycling. When offered the opportunity to combine the two I jumped at the chance!

What was the biggest challenge?

Running in all weathers – be

that wind, rain, snow, sleet or thunder! It certainly required perseverance. But it helped me understand that however hard it is to run in awful conditions, our family in North Korea are suffering so much worse. This inspired me to pray for them whilst running.

What was the highlight?

Doing the challenge with an amazing group of people. The sense of community was remarkable and you never felt like you were in this alone. Every



week Erica (team member) would add up everyone's miles and mark on the map where we were on our journey. It was highly motivating.

RACHEL FROM COLORADO, USA – RUNNING, WALKING, SKIING (IN -27°C!)



What inspired you to 'Go the Extra Mile'?

My friend Erica invited me to do this challenge. It seemed like a fun way to connect with believers around the world and support a great cause! It was also great for my mental and physical health.

What was the biggest challenge?

Staying consistent, as the weather is really variable where I live. There were days that felt too cold to exercise and

days that felt too hot, but the encouragement from the team inspired me to get out every day, even if it was just for a mile.

What was the highlight?

The long and challenging bike ride I did in the last week of the challenge. We were getting close to the end, so I was glad to have time to log quite a few miles that day (rather than lower mileage when running or walking) and see it pay off when we reached our goal just a few days later!

WILL YOU WALK WITH THEM?

Would you like to go the extra mile to raise vital support for persecuted Christians in India like Vinita (p.7)?

You are invited to journey with your brothers and sisters in India this summer by signing up for Walk with Them India, a fundraising activity where you can get sponsored to walk a route and distance of your choice. The money you raise will go directly towards helping vulnerable Christians in India. And to equip you for the journey, you'll have access to a downloadable resource featuring stories, activities and

prayers for use and reflection whilst you walk, helping you to feel even closer to your persecuted family in India.

Find out more and sign up at opendoorsuk.org/fundraise



WHAT'S YOUR IDEA?

Your fundraising efforts make an enormous difference to the persecuted church – not just with the money you raise but the awareness you spread. Activities can come in all forms. Recently, supporters have sold artwork, donated birthday presents, shaved off their hair, baked cakes and run long distances.

Head to opendoorsuk.org/fundraise for all the fundraising information you need, including guidance on promoting your activity on social media.

CORONAVIRUS
CRISIS

STRUCK DOWN

NOT ONCE, BUT TWICE

Christians in India aren't just facing a devastating pandemic – they also face increasingly extreme persecution for their faith, every day.

Hindu extremists have vowed to wipe out the church in India. The violent attacks and destructive lies haven't stopped for the pandemic.

But when the pandemic stops, will the church survive and have a future? Your gifts, prayers and action can help ensure it does.

GIVE A gift today of £60 could give urgent Covid relief aid and help with medical costs to a victim of violence or a believer who has lost their livelihood through the pandemic.

PRAY Join Indian Christians in a month of prayer, using your enclosed prayer diary.

ACT Stand for truth and speak out on behalf of the Indian church. Share #StandForTruthIndia on social media.

To make your gift, return the enclosed envelope, phone **01993 460015** or visit **opendoorsuk.org**. Thank you.