“God is always with me”

Persecuted children find hope at Christmas
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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Celebrate Christmas with the children of the persecuted church using our new Christmas resources.

Come on a journey through the Christmas story and discover the inspirational faith of Christian children worldwide. Includes service sheet, videos and giveaway cards (ideal for giving to visitors to your church service).

Order your FREE resources today at opendoorsuk.org/christmas

“My best thing about Christmas are the dramas we watch in church and the songs we sing.” Sele (13), Nigeria

Letter from Henrietta

God’s Christmas presence

“Don’t be afraid, for I am with you” ISAIAH 41:10 (NLT)

Last Christmas, perhaps like many of you, my husband and I spent Christmas on our own at home. This year, I’m hoping that we’ll be able to see my parents, my sister and her children, and maybe even some friends and neighbours. You might have the same story – looking forward to Christmas 2021, when you’ll be able to see the friends and family you couldn’t see last year.

For others, of course, it will sadly be a time for remembering those they’ve lost – the empty chair at the Christmas table. That’s how Christmas has always been for Rafif in Iraq and Sele in Nigeria, and countless other young Christians around the world. Their fathers were both killed because of their Christian faith, and both children are experiencing the long-term effects of persecution – you can read their story on p6.

But, praise God, we know that He has not abandoned them. I love that glorious truth in Isaiah 41:10 – “Don’t be afraid, for I am with you.” It’s the loving, steadfast presence of our ‘Emmanuel’ that encourages and strengthens Rafif, Sele and, indeed, all of us. And we can help ensure that persecuted children know they are not alone this Christmas, or ever. Your prayers and gifts are sustaining children like Rafif and Sele – and therefore the future of the church. It’s a vital investment in the next generation of courageous believers.

Thank you so much for all you’re doing to strengthen your persecuted church family. On p12, you can see some of the impact that your prayerful support has had this year. One way to continue this support is by inviting your MP to the parliamentary launch of the Open Doors World Watch List 2022 in January. It’s a wonderful opportunity to share the voices of the persecuted church with those in power. You can invite your MP using the tear-off invite enclosed with your magazine.

I truly hope you and your family have a blessed and joyful Christmas,
World Watch News

NORTH KOREA

Report highlights government efforts to ‘exterminate’ Christianity

North Korean authorities aim to root out Christianity and are trying to do so through an ‘absolute denial of religious freedom’, says a new report by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom.

“The campaign to exterminate all Christian adherents and institutions in North Korea has been brutally effective, and continues through the work of the Ministry of State Security, networks of informants that stretch into China, the presence of ‘no-exit’ political prison camps, executions and an educational and organisational system that deters adherence through schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods,” the report states.

The findings won’t come as a surprise to Open Doors supporters. However, it’s a welcome contribution towards efforts to draw global attention to the awful plight of our persecuted family in North Korea. Please pray that the report will provoke further international action on behalf of the country’s Christians.

MYANMAR

Pastor killed as Christians caught in crossfire

A pastor has been tragically killed in Myanmar as Christians become increasingly caught in the crossfire between the military, ethnic armed groups and citizens resisting the military coup.

The pastor was reportedly shot by soldiers in the Christian-majority Chin state whilst trying to put out a fire caused by an attack on nearby homes.

Tom Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, said that the pastor’s death and the shelling of homes ‘are the latest example of the living hell being delivered daily by junta forces against the people of Myanmar’. He adds, “The world needs to pay close attention. More importantly, the world needs to act.”

Meanwhile, churches continue to be subjected to attacks, raids and occupation by the military.

Siblings climb three mountains

Brother Andrew’s famous book God’s Smuggler has inspired so many people – and recently it led to two young siblings taking on a huge challenge for our persecuted family.

After reading the book, Esther (10) and Ezra (7) (above) climbed three mountains in Taipei, Taiwan, in three weeks: Teapot Mountain (the most challenging and adventurous), Qingshang (in typhoon rain!), and Mountain Mantian.

In total, they raised £374. An amazing achievement – thank you Esther and Ezra!

AFGHANISTAN

“If you love us, please pray for us”

As international attention on Afghanistan starts to dwindle, local believers begin to settle into life under the Taliban.

“When the Taliban took control, it was everything we feared,” says Saad*, whose wife gave birth to a baby girl on the day the Taliban seized power. “You cannot understand it like I do. I felt someone step into my night the Taliban took control.”

“We need you to ask God on our behalf. We need to know you are strong. Everyone seems to have forgotten God. This is very frightening. We feel disoriented. We feel alone. We cannot speak of our God, but you can. So, speak to Him and ask Him to empower you and us to fight this era of destructiveness and bring His kingdom by being like Him. If you love us, please pray for us.”

You can find prayer requests from Afghanistan in the November prayer diary.

*Names changed for security reasons

Welding training helps Linet to See. Change.

When Linet from Uganda became a Christian, she lost everything, including custody of her children. It’s been tremendously difficult for her, but your support is helping her not only survive but thrive.

Linet was brought up in a Muslim family. When she gave her life to Jesus in 2017, her entire family rejected her. Linet fled and married a man whose staunchly Muslim faith only emerged later, at which point he stopped her from attending church. After choosing Jesus, Linet was divorced by her husband and she lost custody of their two sons. It left Linet in a desperate situation, as she struggled for food and shelter. She sank into depression.

“If Open Doors had not helped Linet, she would have remained traumatised and weak in the faith,” shares an Open Doors local partner. “Thanks to you, she has also become a leader amongst the church community, bearing fruit that abides.”

For the latest news and stories of courageous faith, visit opendoorsuk.org
“When he saw the bomb, he ran towards the bus,” says Rafif, from Iraq. “Mum and other people always say that he saved so many people’s lives and that he is a hero.”

Everything Rafif knows about her dad she has heard from her mum, and other people who knew him. Because when Raddif ran towards that bus filled with Christian students, warning them of the planned bombing, he saved a lot of lives but was himself killed. It would be a few more months before Rafif was born. She’s 11 now, and she never got to meet her dad. She’s one of many, many Christian children across the world suffering the long-term effects of persecution.

MISSING DAD AT CHRISTMAS

“I miss my dad,” says Rafif. “Especially when I hear my friends say, ‘My dad did this with me, my dad brought me that.’” It’s hardest of all at Christmas – a time when families often hope to all be together. In Rafif’s house, there’s an empty chair at their Christmas table. While Raddif can’t celebrate the birth of Jesus with them in person, Rafif does have something special to help remember him. He created a nativity scene out of papier-mâché, complete with figures representing Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus.

“My father made this,” Rafif says while carefully adjusting some figures in the scene. “I never knew him, but by setting up
when a father is killed for his Christian faith. Because Rafif’s family lost its breadwinner, making them economically vulnerable. They also lost their home – she and her mother had to flee Mosul when so-called Islamic State (IS) invaded. The city is still too unsafe for Christians to return home.

GENERATIONS OF BELIEVERS
At her church, there are many other young children who’ve had a similar unsettling and uncertain start to life, even if their parents haven’t been killed. Iraq has seen a sustained campaign of violence by IS, and persecution doesn’t just affect the individuals who are killed or otherwise targeted: it has an impact that lasts for generations.

And that’s why, with your help, persecuted Christian children are supported – not just with vital short-term aid and shelter, but with long-term education, discipleship and investment. Sparking hope that lasts. Open Doors believes that every child persecuted for their faith should be protected, provided for and strengthened to ensure a better future for them and the long-term survival of the church.

RAFIF’S FAVOURITE BIBLE STORIES
Rafif loves the Christian education classes that she gets from Open Doors partners in Iraq. “The thing I like most is that we learn more about God,” she says. “The second thing I like is that we learn new stories – my favourite Bible story is the one with Noah and the rainbow with all the animals. The thing I like most about it is the rainbow.”

Rafif is still a young child, but she sees that the most wonderful thing about the story of Noah is God’s powerful promise in the rainbow – the ‘sign of the covenant’ God established in Genesis 9. At this time of year, of course, Rafif also loves hearing the Christmas story. And, elsewhere, she sees how her dad is like biblical heroes of the faith.

“GOD IS ALWAYS THERE FOR ME”
Above all, these classes help Rafif get to know more about her Heavenly Father. “The most important thing I have learned in Christian education class is that God is always there for me,” she says. “He never leaves me.”

In the face of uncertainty, we can all be sure that God doesn’t leave us. It’s a truth that Rafif and her mother hold dear as they spend Christmas without Raddif. And your gifts and prayers help make God’s presence even clearer – through Christian classes and church – as well as showing that their worldwide family cares for them.

Rafif knows that Iraq is not the only place where children are persecuted for their faith. All over the world millions of children miss a parent, face violence or are discriminated against for their faith. When Rafif is asked about them, she knows what would help: “Every one of those kids should have a Christian education class like I do.”

SELE IN NIGERIA
One of those children is 13-year-old Sele in Nigeria. He loves the Christmas period. “My favourite thing about Christmas is the dramas we watch in church and...
partners, as they grieve Sele’s father below Sele and his mother Cecelia are being supported by Open Doors above Sele wants to share his Christmas greeting with you: “Thank you when my husband was alive, Solomon,” explains Cecelia, Sele’s mum. He was only two years old when his father was shot and killed in 2011, part of a wave of extreme violence that engulfed Nigeria’s Plateau State at the time. Christians in the region still face kidnap, attack or murder from different groups of Islamic extremists.

“I was preparing food,” remembers Cecelia. “We began to hear gunshots everywhere. The last call we had, Solomon said I should go home and take care of our children. He said everything in town was on fire, but I should stay calm.”

It was the final call she received from her husband. The next day, she heard confirmation that he had been killed.

HOLDING ON TO JESUS “When my husband was alive, we were living peacefully,” remembers Cecelia. “He was a farmer and provided for all our needs.”

Without the family breadwinner, Cecelia had to take over the farming herself to earn an income. Many people might have despaired – but she knew, like Rafif knows, that God will not abandon her. “I decided to hold on to Jesus,” she says simply.

Sele has to help his mother with difficult farm work but, thanks to the gifts and prayers of Open Doors supporters, there is also money to send him to school. And Sele has big dreams that show his caring heart.

“One day, I want to be a doctor,” he says. “I want to save lives and help people. I love my school – my teachers teach me very well, and they are helping me to become what I want to be. If I don’t go to school, I will feel very sad, because I will not become the doctor I want to be.”

“I love my school – my teachers teach me very well, and they are helping me to become what I want to be” Sele

“I WANT TO BE LIKE DAVID” And it’s not just science that Sele is learning: he attends a Christian school, where he can hear more about God and live out his faith openly. The story he likes best is one that many children around the world also love reading: “My favourite Bible story is David and Goliath, because I want to be like David who had faith in God and defeated Goliath.”

Sele is thriving at the school. Cecelia shares: “When he receives exam results, he asks me if I can call the office [Open Doors local partners] to tell them he came first in his class. I thank God for Open Doors – they constantly come and visit me, and always support me with Sele’s school fees.”

“I want to say thank you to the brothers and sisters who are helping me,” adds Sele. “Merry Christmas everybody – may God bless you!”

SPARK HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS God is certainly blessing Sele and Rafif through you – and hundreds of other young persecuted Christians (see box p9). There are so many more children who need to know that God is with them as they face discrimination, persecution or grief simply because they and their family follow Jesus.

With your support, Open Doors brings short-term care and long-term hope and provision for the next generation of believers. It’s vital because God loves these courageous boys and girls – and because we have to invest in the next generation to ensure the survival of the worldwide church.

This Christmas, can you help remind Christian children that God will never leave them – and neither will their global family?

PLEASE PRAY • That Radif and Sele would continue to grow in their knowledge and love of God, sharing His hope with those around them • For God’s loving protection over Christian communities over the Christmas period when attacks are more common, so that other children don’t have to lose their fathers or mothers • For every child persecuted for their faith to be protected, provided for and strengthened to ensure a better future for them and the long-term survival of the church.

PLEASE GIVE • Every £20 could help give a child discipleship and biblical resources so they can stand firm in their faith. • Every £60 could provide a vital food parcel for a family, including a special Christmas gift for a child.

You can send a message of encouragement to children like Rafif in the Middle East this Christmas. As part of Do Not Be Afraid, the Open Doors Christmas resource, we’re encouraging families and children’s groups to decorate an angel with a message of hope or a picture. Send your ‘angels’ in and they’ll be made into bunting to decorate places where children’s groups meet. It’s a great opportunity to reassure persecuted Christian children that their worldwide family is praying for them!

Go to opendoorsuk.org/christmas to find out more about all Open Doors’ Christmas resources.
NORTH KOREA

"You strived to help the weakest part of the body of Christ"

Brother Simon* is an Open Doors partner working with North Korean believers through networks in China. You may have caught our interview with him in the January 2021 magazine. In an update, he shares how your prayers and support are enabling this vital work to continue – despite the challenges of Covid restrictions.

“Our distribution projects, providing food and medicines for North Korean Christians, have been very significant in supporting their survival during this desperate situation, and we have increased the amount we are providing,” he says. “While the borders closing meant that fewer people could leave North Korea, it also meant that people who had left before the pandemic then couldn’t get back into North Korea.

“In this way, God provided a new opportunity for our workers to contact these North Koreans who were stuck outside of North Korea and to provide them with shelter in our safe houses, practical support and biblical training. Even during such difficult times, God continues to show us His faithfulness.

“All the devotion, sacrifice and faith of the numerous supporters will be answered by God thirty times, sixty times and a hundred times over, with fruit that will be ripe in the North Korean mission field. As all of you strived to help the weakest part of the body of Christ during the most difficult time, I believe all you brothers and sisters of the world will be blessed. As Jesus says, ‘Well done, my good and trustworthy servant!’”

SEE. CHANGE. FOR PERSECUTED WOMEN

“Thank you, beloved ones, for helping in our suffering”

Sarata* (below) from Cameroon was widowed after her husband died from a stress-related illness, owing to the constant distress and unrest of Boko Haram attacks in the area. She became the sole breadwinner for her six children and struggled on, tilling a small plot of farmland. Tragically, a few years after her husband’s death, Sarata lost her 16-year-old daughter Lydia in a Boko Haram attack.

But Sarata is not alone. Thanks to your prayers and support, and her local church, she is receiving spiritual care and financial support. She says, “We are suffering, and you thought of us, thank you so much! Thank you, beloved ones, for helping in our suffering…Thank you very much Open Doors!”

“Wealthy money I received, I paid for the children’s schooling and the farm work. I bought food and I also saved some for if someone gets sick. It really helps me. I thank you because you came to help us. Thank you, thank you! All I can really say to you is thank you.”

*Names changed for security reasons

H O P E F O R T H E M I D D L E E A S T

“We see the youth flourishing thanks to your help”

In Syria and Iraq, after over a decade of conflict and persecution, Centres of Hope – supported by Open Doors – are helping Christians, churches and communities to rebuild and restore.

Sister Manal manages one of these centres – she describes the effect of the conflict on people’s lives: “Buildings were destroyed, and properties were stolen. The church also suffered the loss of the people; how many Christians were killed? Kidnapped? Kids lost their fathers and women lost their husbands. The war drove the youth to leave the country; they see no future here; they see a dead end. This puts the future of the church and the country in jeopardy.”

Thanks to you, there is hope for our persecuted church family in the Middle East through these centres – which continually point to Jesus as the ultimate hope. Sister Manal focuses on training young people and giving them vocations, as well as spiritual support. “We work with the youth in order to help them see a future here…We want them to think of the church as a refuge for them. We pray that this generation will turn out healthy, strong, well-trained and capable of carrying our ministry to future generations.”

Sister Manal adds, “Please continue helping us and the church in Syria. Your support is like the widow’s pennies. We need it so much in Syria and it means a lot to us to have you thinking of us and praying for us. When we see the youth flourishing and growing thanks to your help, we glorify the name of God, and we thank you.”

0 ye, beneath life’s crushing load, Whose forms are bending low, Who toil along the climbing way, With painful steps and slow.

So goes the well-known carol ‘It Came Upon a Midnight Clear’ – and well describes Whoil’s beneath life’s crushing load, Whose forms are bending low, Who toil along the climbing way, With painful steps and slow.

“Thank you, beloved ones, for helping in our suffering…Thank you very much Open Doors!”

*Names changed for security reasons

YOUR support enabled Rami to open a shop in his community in Syria.
SECRET BELIEVERS

- Thanks to you, I am able to support underground Christians

Around the world, there are thousands of Christians from Muslim backgrounds who must hide their faith – being discovered could mean being disowned, imprisoned or even killed. One secret believer says, “My life is always at risk. I’m still being watched. I can’t go to a church for fellowship, not even a secret house church meeting. I meet other Christians in hideout places... Most of these people were like me: secret believers who had met Jesus in dreams and visions but had no access to God’s Word.”

These situations make discipling new believers difficult – but not impossible. Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors local partners are reaching believers through secret networks to provide what they need. “Your organisation [Open Doors local partners] has visited me and my family and prayed with us,” the secret believer says. “Thank you so deeply for the relief aid, and the ongoing discipleship. And it’s thanks to your financial provision that I am able to support underground Christians. Particularly those suffering in prison. God is doing powerful things in my country, but... we expect more violence and destruction before things get better. Please pray for us. We need God’s strength.”

INDIA

- I praise God for this provision

Violent persecution against Christians is increasing in India, fuelled by anti-Christian propaganda spread by Hindu extremists. Pastor Darshan* (right) was attacked by extremists after sharing about “The love of Christ does not allow me to sit in silence”

Jesus in a neighbouring village. But he is determined to keep going. “The love of Christ does not allow me to sit in silence,” he says. “I want to share the love of God to many.”

Thanks to your gifts and prayers, Darshan and other missionaries in India have been provided with bikes! These will enable them to reach more rural areas to support Christians and tell others about Jesus.

“I praise God for this provision,” says Darshan. “I am so happy to receive this bike. It will ease my travel worries to nearby villages. I am assured that when you serve people, God opens ways to encourage and bless His servants. Thank you so much for the provision.”

A LITTLE CAKE GOES A LONG WAY – FUNDRAISING FOR YOUR FAMILY

A huge thank you to everyone this year who has taken on a fundraising challenge for the persecuted church! We’ve seen everything this year, from baking, to running, to marmalade stalls and racing along zipwires – all to raise money for our sisters and brothers around the world.

Ezra, Caleb, Boaz and Ariela were inspired to do just that after learning more about Open Doors: they ran a stall selling homemade cake. Their mum said, “Having used some of Open Doors’ children’s materials as part of our home-school curriculum and loving it, my kids were keen to raise some money for Open Doors. We did our stall and it was a great success. We had lots of friends and neighbours visit and buy many different cakes and, in the end, we raised £110 for Open Doors!”

Below: A huge thank you to Ezra, Caleb, Boaz and Ariela for raising £110 for their persecuted church family!

STANDING STRONG LIVE 2021

Thank you so much to everyone who joined us for this year’s Standing Strong Live! It was an incredible evening of worship, prayer, inspiration and challenge, as we heard from our persecuted church family across the Middle East and India.

One attendee said, “It was lovely to hear from and see some of the people we have prayed for previously. Their stand for the Lord and work in His strength was inspiring and challenging.”

Father Aram from Iraq, who was interviewed during the event, is grateful for your continued support. “Already we are in your prayers!” he said. “Already you are trying to help us. And you did! The reality we have is like the hands of God working through you. So, I didn’t feel alone – never!”

Don’t forget to save the date for next year! Standing Strong Live 2022 will be in person on Saturday 24 September 2022 in Birmingham.

“Names changed for security reasons”

HELP BELIEVERS SEE MORE ‘GLAD AND GOLDEN HOURS’ IN 2022

Thank you so much for all that you have done for the persecuted church this year! God multiplies our prayers, gifts and actions beyond anything we can imagine.

You can be part of the exciting things God is doing around the world. If you’d like to support the work of Open Doors with a regular gift, or want to receive weekly prayer updates from the persecuted church, head to opendoorsuk.org or call 01993 460015.
Why I’ve left a legacy to Open Doors

Most people write a Will to make sure that, after they have died, their family is cared for. Christians have the privilege that our family includes millions of believers around the world – and leaving a gift to Open Doors in your Will can make an enormous difference to the persecuted church for many years to come.

Valerie and Richard, two Open Doors supporters, share why they’ve chosen to leave a legacy and the hopes and vision they have for future generations of the church around the world.

“HOW ON EARTH CAN WE IGNORE THESE PEOPLE?” VALERIE’S STORY

I was a child when I became a Christian – the Lord caught me in the net! I was born again and really on fire. My parents threw me out – they used to call me names and all sorts. But when I came to know Jesus and what He’d done for me, I felt a great joy. I got involved with Open Doors when I was a teenager, at university. One of the projects our Christian Union supported was Project Pearl – smuggling a million Bibles to a beach in China in one night.

“I want to see that support continue after our lives on earth end”

For more than 40 years, my wife and I have supported the work of Open Doors. Being connected with the persecuted church has both challenged and encouraged our faith – it deeply enriches our understanding of God and how He is working in the world today.

The Bible tells us that we are one body with our persecuted family, and we should share their suffering. Yet it’s a give and take – we’re told to do it, but we’re blessed by it.

We know from the Bible that persecution is only going to get worse, and the persecuted church is always going to be with us. The countries may change, and the particular needs might change, but there will always be a need for charities like Open Doors.

And that’s why I’ve chosen to leave a legacy to Open Doors in my Will. I like that they work with local churches on the ground; I appreciate the communications I receive about their work and hearing relevant information for prayer and education. My wife and I have supported the work of Open Doors all through our earthly life together – and we want to see that support continue after our lives on this earth end.

“WE SHOULD SHARE WITH THE OTHER PARTS OF THE BODY” RICHARD’S STORY

I got involved with Open Doors when I was a teenager, at university. One of the projects our Christian Union supported was Project Pearl – smuggling a million Bibles to a beach in China in one night.

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The Bible tells us that we are one body with our persecuted family, and we should share with the other parts of the body – specifically those who are suffering. Yet it’s a give and take – we’re told to do it, but we’re blessed by it.

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The Legacy team at Open Doors would love to talk to you if you have any questions or would like any further information. You can get in touch with Helen by emailing helenl@opendoorsuk.org or calling 01993 460015.

You can order your legacy pack at opendoorsuk.org/legacy, which includes more information, text for your solicitor, and stories of impact – including the difference that your gift could make for many years to those who follow Jesus no matter the cost.
Christianity can bring rejection groups, where conversion to one’s ten Muslim people added pressure comes closer to For some Christians, like Ehmet, – and it may yet get worse. hitting Christians from all sides reinterpretation of Bible sermons to the oppressive church closures to intrusive increasing suffocation. From China, Christians are facing other believers in prison. could communicate with they were the only ways he gestures were a lifeline – But for Ehmet* in China, these they’re part of everyday life. But for Ehmet* in China, these gestures were a lifeline – they were the only ways he could communicate with other believers in prison. In China, Christians are facing increasing suffocation. From church closures to intrusive surveillance, interference with sermons to the oppressive reinterpretation of Bible passages, the clampdown is hitting Christians from all sides – and it may yet get worse. For some Christians, like Ehmet, added pressure comes closer to home. Ehmet comes from one of China’s ten Muslim people groups, where conversion to Christianity can bring rejection from family and friends. Whether such believers openly express their new faith or keep it secret, many are being caught up in a crackdown on these ethnic groups by the Chinese authorities.

Ehmet’s story of imprisonment, oppression and surveillance reflects the escalating pressures facing Christians in China and across the world.

When the last time you received a knowing look or nod of the head to communicate something? You might find it difficult to remember, since they’re part of everyday life. But for Ehmet* in China, these gestures were a lifeline – they were the only ways he could communicate with other believers in prison.

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But weeks turned to months and, after a year, Ehmet prayed, “Lord, I surrender. You decide when I should be released.” Immediately, he was overcome with a deep sense of peace, hope and freedom.

Before long, Ehmet was transferred to another camp, where he met other believers. Not allowed to talk to each other, the believers communicated through a knowing look or nod of the head. It brought them enormous encouragement.

Ehmet has since been released. “Although back in his own home, the surveillance continues,” shares Philip* (pictured above), an Open Doors local partner who supports Ehmet. “This hasn’t crushed his vibrant faith, and he still trusts in the Lord. Time in the re-education camp actually deepened his faith and renewed his intimacy with God.”

SUFFOCATING STRUGGLE

As the world experiences a resurgence of terrorism and growing authoritarianism, persecuted Christians like Ehmet face intensifying pressure on every side – and all exacerbated by the social and economic impact of Covid-19. Whether under surveillance by the state in China, facing social exclusion in India or violent extremism across West Africa and the Middle East, daily life for millions of Christians across the world is a suffocating struggle.

Amidst all this, your prayers, gifts and voices are helping our persecuted brothers and sisters to breathe. Another Chinese believer supported by Philip and other Open Doors local partners is Ruth*, whose husband was detained for several months for leading a Christian meeting. “I am able to share all my pain and frustrations each time you [Open Doors local partners] come because I trust you,” Ruth shares. “This has totally set me free. When you visit, I feel loved, comforted and surrounded in prayer.”

PEOPLE PRAY

• For God to strengthen, protect and encourage Ehmet, Ruth and her husband, and Philip as they follow Jesus

• That the 2022 World Watch List launch will be well attended by MPs, and that they will be equipped to effect change for religious minorities

• That God will powerfully use Amanda Milling MP and Liz Truss MP in their new roles

*names changed for security reasons

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For some Christians, like Ehmet, added pressure comes closer to home. Ehmet comes from one of China’s ten Muslim people groups, where conversion to Christianity can bring rejection from family and friends. Whether such believers openly express their new faith or keep it secret, many are being caught up in a crackdown on these ethnic groups by the Chinese authorities.

But weeks turned to months and, after a year, Ehmet prayed, “Lord, I surrender. You decide when I should be released.” Immediately, he was overcome with a deep sense of peace, hope and freedom.

Before long, Ehmet was transferred to another camp, where he met other believers. Not allowed to talk to each other, the believers communicated through a knowing look or nod of the head. It brought them enormous encouragement.

Ehmet has since been released. “Although back in his own home, the surveillance continues,” shares Philip* (pictured above), an Open Doors local partner who supports Ehmet. “This hasn’t crushed his vibrant faith, and he still trusts in the Lord. Time in the re-education camp actually deepened his faith and renewed his intimacy with God.”

Ehmet’s story of imprisonment, oppression and surveillance reflects the escalating pressures facing Christians in China and across the world.

WHEN YOU VISIT, I FEEL LOVED, COMFORTED AND SURROUNDED IN PRAYER

EHMET DETAINED FOR A YEAR

Ehmet is one of many Christians who have been detained and sent to a ‘re-education’ camp. Initially, Ehmet wasn’t too concerned, because other family members were already there. He thought he’d be released within a few weeks.

At the World Watch List parliamentary launch, MPs will hear more about the persecution facing Christians like Lami Mari, a widow from Cameroon (above), and Ehmet, who is supported by Philip, a Chinese fieldworker (left).

CABINET RESHUFFLE – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Amanda Milling MP has replaced Nigel Adams MP as Minister for Asia. Thousands of you wrote to Nigel Adams to highlight the existential threat facing Christians in India. Your advocacy is not in vain! Amanda Milling will be updated on the campaign by her department, whilst Open Doors has sent a copy of the Destructive Lies report on India’s religious minorities and requested a meeting with her.

Liz Truss MP is the new Foreign Secretary. Her department will be reviewing the progress of the Bishop of Truro’s review on the persecution of Christians. Liz Truss will keep her previous role as Minister for Women and Equalities, which is very positive for our advocacy work on the double vulnerability of Christian women. Open Doors has written to her to welcome her to the role and inform her about the plight of our persecuted family.

INVITE YOUR MP TO THE WORLD WATCH LIST LAUNCH

You can help bring freedom to our persecuted family, like Ehmet, by inviting your MP to the World Watch List parliamentary launch on Wednesday 19 January 2022. This is a precious opportunity for those in power to hear about the 50 countries where it’s most dangerous to follow Jesus, and discover how they can use their influence to protect religious freedom and support those treated as second-class citizens because of their faith.

Over 100 MPs attended the launch of the 2021 World Watch List. This would not have been possible without your invaluable contribution. It would be amazing to have even more MPs attend next year’s event. To invite your MP, simply fill in and send the tear-off invite enclosed with this magazine. Alternatively, scan the QR code or visit opendoorsuk.org/advocacy. Thank you!
SPARK HOPE THIS CHRISTMAS

“I miss my dad, because he is not there at Christmas. He can’t celebrate it with me.”

Rafif’s dad was killed by Islamic extremists in Iraq, who planted a bomb on a bus full of Christian students.

Rafif wouldn’t be born until a few months later, and never met her dad. But, at Christian education classes run by Open Doors partners, she has found hope through learning about God. “God is always there for me,” she says. “He never leaves me.”

Across the world, Open Doors is supporting the next generation of believers for the long-term – with Christian education, vital relief, trauma care and more.

“Children have found their spark - Jesus who came to this earth and still is with us,” says a local Open Doors partner.

This Christmas, will you help spark hope for persecuted Christian children?

- **Every £45** could help give a child discipleship and biblical resources so they can stand firm in their faith.
- **Every £60** could provide a vital food parcel for a family, including a special Christmas gift for a child.

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

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CHRISTMAS APPEAL