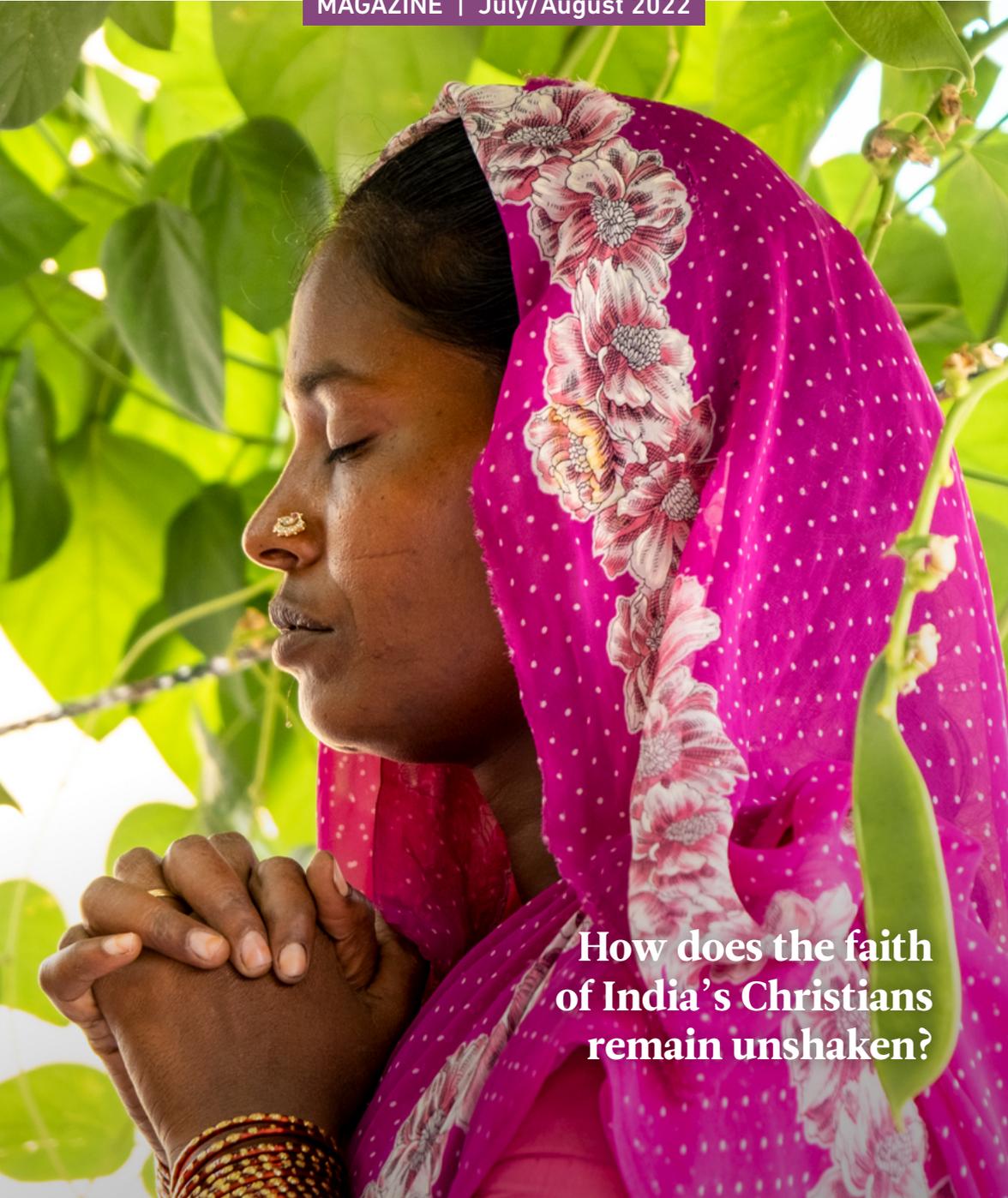


Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | July/August 2022



**How does the faith
of India's Christians
remain unshaken?**



OpenDoors

STANDING STRONG

In-person and online event

ANNUAL GATHERING 2022

Saturday 24 September, 7.30pm

Trent Vineyard, Nottingham, NG7 2PX

You're invited to meet your persecuted church family! Hear first-hand from believers including Father Daniel from Iraq, and join other Christians from the UK and Ireland in prayer and worship.

Book now: opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong



SEND A LETTER OF HOPE

Your letters make a huge difference to our persecuted family – and now you can write to more Christians with our latest letter-writing guide!

Order your copy – featuring believers from North Africa and Nigeria – at opendoorsuk.org/write

“By sending us these cards, it is proven to me that there are lots and lots of people thinking about us and praying for us. I thank them.” - TAHER* FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

We've been looking everywhere for you!



Are you concerned about the growing persecution of Christians worldwide?

Do you want to use your skills to build God's kingdom across the world?

Open Doors UK is looking to recruit talented individuals for a range of roles to help us strengthen those who follow Jesus no matter the cost.

Head to opendoorsuk.org/careers to find out if you could be just the person we are looking for!

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.

Contact us:

England and Wales
PO Box 6, Witney
Oxon OX29 6WG
T 01993 460015

Ireland
PO Box 873
Belfast BT15 1WZ
T 02890 751080

Scotland
T 01292 800006

E inspire@opendoorsuk.org

Find us on:

opendoorsuk.org



Open Doors UK & I

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Cover:

An illustrative image of a Christian woman in India ©IMB.org

Letter from Henrietta

Unshakeable faith

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.”

HEBREWS 12:28

India's constitution guarantees religious freedom. It says, 'all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practise and propagate religion'. And that's why I find it especially shocking that this is so far from the experience of Christians and other religious minorities in some parts of the country.

Our brothers and sisters in India face both violent persecution and everyday discrimination. I am shocked by the cruelty of the physical attacks faced by Christians at the hands of Hindu extremists, but persecution is increasingly institutionalised too. Police and others in authority frequently collude with the attackers, and persecuted Christians find they are no longer seen as victims of crime but are accused of criminal acts themselves. Persecution even comes at the hands of doctors and nurses. Mehr's* story (p8) is particularly distressing for this reason. Can you imagine going to the hospital after being violently assaulted, and then being told that you couldn't get medical treatment – just because you're a Christian?

Open Doors partners in India go to believers like Mehr as soon as they learn about an attack. I'm always moved to hear about the speed with which they rush to help – it shows how deeply they care. In Mehr's case, I'm pleased to say they were able to get her moved to a hospital that would treat Christians, and paid her medical bills. Mehr is an amazing woman, and her perseverance is inspiring and touching. I'd encourage you to read her story on p8.

Now, more than ever, we have to show Indian Christians like Mehr that they aren't abandoned. It means so much to our brothers and sisters to know that tens of thousands of people in the UK and Ireland know their story and are praying for them. The situation in India isn't improving – but we can be encouraged by Mehr's unshakeable faith. Let's keep praying, supporting and raising awareness for Mehr and millions of Christians in India like her. At a time when many in our nation are facing increased uncertainty, I am especially grateful for your faithful support for our persecuted family. You can see the impact you are having in the Annual Review (p14).

Every blessing,



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

*Name changed for security reasons

World Watch News

NORTH KOREA

Believer sends letter as 'first' Covid-19 cases declared

A smuggled letter from an underground church leader in North Korea has revealed the strong faith of its secret believers. It was sent just as the country declared its 'first' Covid-19 cases.

"Especially through the coronavirus pandemic and several great natural disasters that followed the virus, things seem to threaten us in every way," the letter says. "Difficulties and hindrances lay hidden here and there, but because we know that the Lord allows us to unite together as one to share the faith and fellowship, we walk upon the way of a pilgrim that trusts and follows the Lord."

The Covid-19 outbreak in Pyongyang was reported in

May, more than two years after the global pandemic began. Open Doors sources say that the situation has long been worse than is being reported, which echoes what a secret fieldworker shared in August 2020 about the 'ghost disease' that was rife in the country.

While the extent to which the country has been hit by Covid-19 is unclear, what is clearer is the impact it's had on reaching believers with help. The restrictions faced by Open Doors fieldworkers have made it one of the hardest challenges the ministry has faced. But despite this, God has made ways for projects to continue, ensuring that our North Korean family have remained upheld by your support.

However, with Kim Jong-Un reinforcing strict lockdowns, our work in the region – such as secret deliveries and the safe house ministry – may be affected. There is also the inevitable impact on the North Korean economy, with the exponential rise in prices for food and other necessities having a potentially devastating effect on people, including secret believers. Meanwhile, the government is clamping down on any suspicious activities, meetings, travel and unusual possessions.

Please pray that despite these latest restrictions, God will guide and protect local fieldworkers in their ministry, and meet the needs of North Korean believers.

CENTRAL ASIA

You've dug deep to provide water

It took a month and people digging around the clock. But eventually, 240 metres underground, a source of water was reached that will serve Afghan refugees in a country neighbouring Afghanistan. None of it would've been possible without your prayers and support.

Due to climate conditions and the terrain, access to water in this area is very difficult, forcing refugees to drink rainwater and water from the river and ditches. It's another challenge for refugees who arrive without clothes and struggle for food.

After asking God for guidance, Open Doors local partners decided to drill for water, but they struggled to find the necessary support because people didn't believe water could be found. But they found one willing company, and the source was found.

"Finally, a miracle happened," reports our partner. "We reached the desired depth and found water. Now, local residents and refugees from Afghanistan, our minister and his family will use this source completely free of charge! Praise the Lord!"



ABOVE This machine helped dig 240 metres underground to find a source of water for Afghan refugees

INDIA

Eleventh state implements anti-conversion laws

In a further blow to India's Christians, Karnataka State has become the country's 11th state to implement anti-conversion laws that are frequently abused to falsely accuse believers.

The laws purport to prevent forced conversion from Hinduism – by means of 'coercion', 'allurement', 'force' or 'fraudulent means'. In practice, Indians who choose to convert to Christianity from Hinduism are often falsely accused of being paid to do so, and Christians who share the gospel are accused of using coercion. These laws don't cover conversion to Hinduism, and mass-reconversion events (Gharwapsi)

have been held to draw people back to the Hindu faith.

"Christians live under a cloud of fear," says a pastor in Karnataka State. Churches have been vandalised, believers ostracised and pastors assaulted.

Please pray that believers will be surrounded by God's peace and protection.



UK

£110 given in memory of 101-year-old



Family and friends raised £110 for Open Doors in memory of Sarah Sheppard (LEFT), who recently died aged 101.

Sarah was 18 when she began training as a nurse in London as World War Two broke out, before becoming a midwife. She later befriended a German prisoner of war and their family. Ruth, her daughter, believes such experiences informed her passion for the

persecuted church. "She was very aware of the impact of oppressive regimes," she says. The stories of people like Brother Andrew and Richard Wurmbrand (founder of Release International) also inspired Sarah.

"She was very keen to pray for the persecuted church and support them," Ruth adds. "It was something very much on her heart." That's why Ruth arranged to raise money for the work of Open Doors in memory of her mother.

Find out how you can give in memory of a loved one at opendoorsuk.org/in-memory

EAST AFRICA

Overhearing about Jesus



You might remember Pastor Salim* from East Africa, who is passionate about reaching out to his Muslim-majority community with the love of Jesus. It's a ministry that brings ridicule, mocking and even death threats. But he's seeing enormous fruit – as one recent encounter demonstrates.

The pastor was praying for a family when a man overheard them and decided he wanted to become a Christian! This picture shows Pastor Salim (ABOVE) praying for the man. "I've lived a bad life, all the while condemning myself," the man said. Praise God for the freedom he now has in Jesus. Please pray that he will grow in faith and have the strength to withstand any potential opposition.

Hundreds of you have written to Pastor Salim. Thank you! It's so encouraging for him to hear from fellow brothers and sisters across the world. This campaign has closed but find out other Christians you can write to at opendoorsuk.org/write

*Name changed for security reasons

You are bringing change

MORE MPs RECOGNISE PERSECUTION OF WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES



Fiona Bruce MP (CENTRE), with other participants at the Open Doors digital persecution conference

Thank you for your commitment to speaking out on behalf of our persecuted family. With your support, Open Doors' advocacy work in Parliament has continued to gain ground, as MPs have recognised and committed to address two growing forms of persecution highlighted by Open Doors' research: gender-specific religious persecution and digital persecution.

On International Women's Day (8 March), Open Doors held a briefing for MPs in conjunction with Aid to the Church in Need on gender-specific religious persecution. It covered the double vulnerability faced by women from religious minorities, who experience persecution both for their faith and their gender.

Nearly 40 MPs responded to this urgent need by signing an Early Day Motion (effectively a petition), calling on the Government to recognise this double vulnerability, and to take action on behalf of persecuted Christian women and women from other religious minorities. Later in March, MPs held a debate in which they urged the Government not to ignore this growing concern. Many thanks

to those of you who contacted your MPs and asked them to get involved.

Open Doors has also been raising awareness of how new technology is exacerbating the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities. On 25 March, Open Doors held a conference, in partnership with the Universities of Birmingham and Roehampton, to discuss this important topic. Contributors highlighted how new technology was enabling the mass surveillance of religious minorities in China, the censorship of information, and the spread of disinformation about Christians and others in places where they are vulnerable to violence.



Following the conference, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Fiona Bruce MP (ABOVE), was able to secure a debate in Parliament in which she brought Open Doors' findings on digital persecution to the attention of the Government. To our knowledge, this is the

first time that the term 'digital persecution' has been used in a parliamentary debate. As new technology gives rise to new opportunities for persecution, we are committed to continuing to highlight this issue to those in power.

PLEASE KEEP SPEAKING OUT

In July, Open Doors will again draw attention to these important issues at the 2022 Freedom of Religion or Belief Ministerial, an international ministerial conference which the UK is hosting in London.

This is a great opportunity for your MP to hear about the growing trends of religious persecution and how they can respond.

If you have not already done so, please invite your MP to attend the Ministerial using the letter enclosed with your Magazine, or by going to opendoorsuk.org. Thank you!



AMONG

LEARNING TO LAMENT WITH THE INDIAN CHURCH

THE ASHES

"When I was 18, God spoke to me," said Rohan, a church pastor from India whose name has been changed for security reasons. "He said, 'I have chosen you and called you by name and you are mine.' That day I dedicated my life for ministry."

That powerful sense of calling led Rohan to become an evangelist and establish a church in his village. Then, one night, it all turned to ashes. The church was set alight by Hindu extremists.

"Everything was burning," recalled Rohan. "It was all burnt to ashes."

Sometimes, following God's calling leads you to a difficult place.

THE NECESSITY OF LAMENT

Rohan's story is featured in *Among the Ashes*, an Open Doors film and resource that combines biblical reflection with stories from the persecuted church, to explore how lament can bring hope, even in the darkest situations.

Open Doors partners helped Rohan to rebuild his church, and he can now reach out to even more people than before. But his experience of trauma and loss is common to so many of our persecuted church family.

"Every day, around the world, persecuted Christians find themselves standing in the

ruins and asking, 'Where did God go?'" says Dr Ron Boyd-Macmillan, who fronts the *Among the Ashes* film.

"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."

None of us want to go through times of suffering and loss. But the truth is that some of the most powerful encounters we will ever have, can only occur in times when we find ourselves standing among the ashes.

AMONG THE ASHES

- Inspirational film featuring stories from India, North Korea and Iraq
- Interactive prayer outline to help your church support those 'among the ashes'
- Great for online talks, church services, prayer evenings or small groups

You can download the full resource, including videos, at opendoorsuk.org/ashes





MOCKED BEATEN YET UNSHAKEN

Why Mehr in India has courageous faith

For Mehr*, an Indian Christian in her twenties, being violently assaulted was only the start of her persecution. After the attack, she faced discrimination at the hands of the people who should help her most.

Mehr grew up as a Hindu, like most people in India. All her family were Hindus, and all her community were Hindus. But she started to question her religion when it couldn't offer any solace for her chronic illness. Mehr found neither healing nor peace through her faith. And then somebody told her about Jesus.

"My mother took me to the church," Mehr remembers. "I was healed! I came to know Jesus as the true Healer – the living God. I gave my life to Jesus. Our lives changed as we got to know God."

Mehr, her mother and her sister were excited about their new life as Christians – but

*Name changed for security reasons



Mehr became a Christian when she found healing at a church. "I came to know Jesus as the true Healer," she says

others in their community were very unhappy. Converting to Christianity comes with significant risk in many parts of India, as Hinduism is often seen as part of the national identity. Christians are seen as traitors.

FALSE ACCUSATIONS

In addition, converts from impoverished areas, like Mehr, are often accused of illegally being paid to become Christians. Recently, two more states in India have introduced anti-conversion laws – bringing the total to 11 states. Though these laws purport to prevent forced conversions, they are often abused to falsely target Christians.

"When we accepted Christ, the people in our community accused us of taking money to become Christian," says Mehr. "We denied such accusations – we told them, Christ did not come for religious conversion. He came to change lives. When we come to the Lord, we receive peace. We are filled with joy."

Mehr's words didn't make any difference. The villagers kept persecuting Mehr and her family. "They isolated us, hurled lewd comments at my sister and me, and shamed us for being involved in 'illegal' activities. They constantly used abusive words and mocked us. It was hurtful."

"THE ATTACKERS STARTED TO BEAT ME MERCILESSLY"

Despite being insulted and rejected by her community, Mehr kept praying for them. As she explains, "Their words hurt momentarily, but my joy in Christ overpowered all the opposition. I believed and prayed that they would experience Jesus the same way we did."

VIOLENT ATTACK

But that didn't happen. Instead, when Mehr's mother and sister were on their way home from a prayer meeting, they were

stopped by a group of angry neighbours. This time, the angry comments escalated into physical violence. The mob began beating Mehr's mother and sister. Mehr ran to rescue them – but the crowd attacked her too.

"The attackers started to beat me mercilessly and tried to strangle me with a cloth," she says, with tears in her eyes as she remembers the traumatic event. "I fell unconscious. I was wounded and bleeding and suffered several injuries across my body."

A bystander managed to stop the persecutors and phoned an ambulance. Mehr was taken to the hospital.

ANXIETY IN THE HOSPITAL

"I was in shock after the incident," Mehr shares. "I was not aware of my surroundings. I was in constant fear that the attackers would look for us again, and experienced anxiety and panic attacks."

Because of her stay at the hospital, Mehr lost her job. She was still being threatened and abused by her attackers, even during recovery. Mehr felt desperate. But her mother and sister reminded her of the hope she has in Christ. They pointed her to Psalm 23:

"...for you are close beside me, your rod and your staff protect and comfort me".

"I was devastated and crushed, unable to understand all that was happening," says Mehr. "But when my sister or mother prayed with me, I was revitalised – and strengthened by the Word of God that He protects and comforts me."

"MY JOY IN CHRIST OVERPOWERED ALL THE OPPOSITION"

Mehr's wider church family also came to show their love and care. "My relatives, my pastors, pastors from other churches came and everyone prayed for me," she remembers. "One of them said, 'Those whose fight the Lord's fights, they never lose.' I slowly started to fortify myself in prayer, reading the Bible and writing down my thoughts to God in the form of songs."

But Mehr's ordeal wasn't over.

DENIED TREATMENT

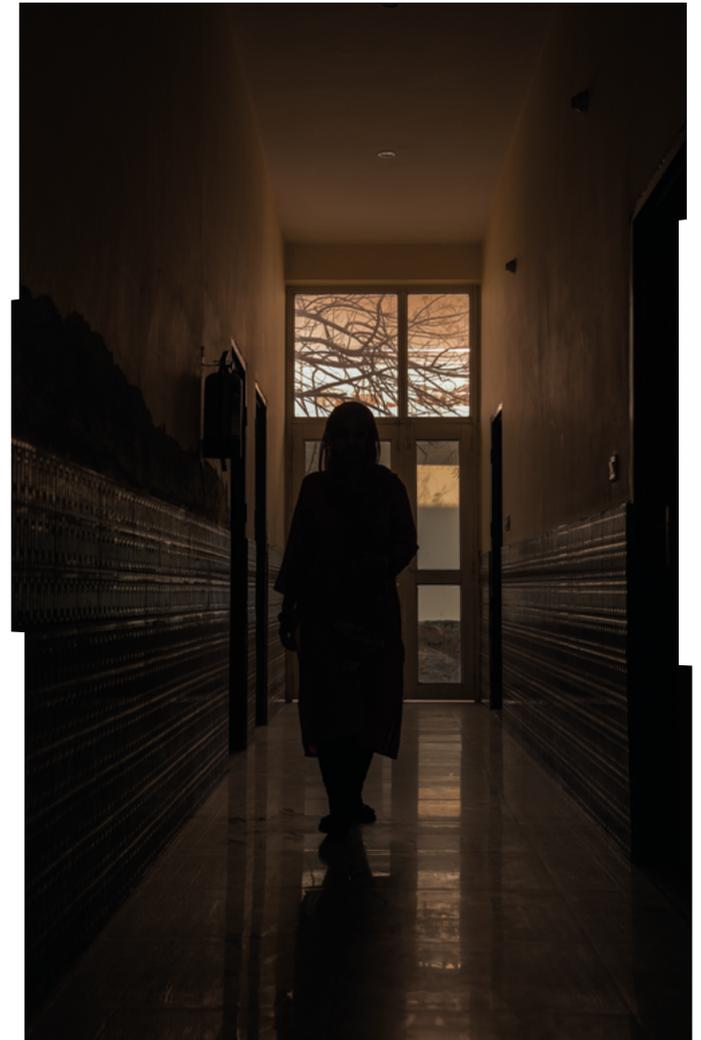
With all the trauma and anxiety Mehr was experiencing, she shouldn't have had to worry about her medical treatment. But the persecution that Christians often face in India has far-reaching effects. The people who attacked Mehr and her family are very influential in their community, and they bribed

the medical staff to stop treating Mehr because she is a Christian.

"The doctors were pressurised so that my treatment wouldn't progress," says Mehr. "The nurses stopped all care. Medicine was also stopped. My heart was gripped with fear – I thought, 'How will I survive?' This kind of injustice should not be done to anyone, Christians or non-Christians."

It's hard to imagine having to cope with discrimination like this from people whose vocation is to care for you. But this form of persecution is all-too common for Indian Christians who are victims of attacks. You might remember reading a similar story about Preetha* in India last year, denied essential hospital care simply because of her faith. You can read an update from Preetha and Vinita* on p16.

At hospital, Mehr was denied treatment – because of her faith





treatment,” says Mehr. “Your ministry paid for my hospital bills. Thank you so much for being an encourager in my life. Surely my cup overflows with blessings. I thank Almighty God for you!”

As well as emergency treatment, local partners are supporting Mehr and her family with financial help and trauma care

their worldwide church family hasn’t forgotten them.

“I am so grateful to my God,” she says. “He certainly has comforted me through your gracious help. When everything looked dark, your presence and prayers uplifted my family and me. I can testify and claim that the plans of God are good and not for my harm, and every circumstance guides me to a future and hope in Christ.”

As well as emergency care and longer-term financial help, Mehr was also able to attend Open Doors training to help her stand firm when facing persecution. She boldly shared her testimony in the seminar and touched many with her unshakeable faith in Christ. “When this attack happened to me, it wasn’t easy to come out of it, but God put one thing on my heart: ‘Do not fear for I am with you’ (Isaiah 41:10).

HEALING AND HOPE

But local Open Doors partners came as quickly as possible to help Mehr, thanks to the gifts and prayers of Open Doors supporters. “As soon as Open Doors partners came to know about my situation, God sent them as divine helpers,” says Mehr. They were able to get Mehr transferred to a hospital that would treat her, and paid for the treatment.

“Our family is not wealthy, and we didn’t have money for

for the long-term. “You are continuing to help us and support us with groceries and all our needs,” says Mehr. “I thank those who helped me, and may God bless them and increase them – so they may be able to help and support other people like they helped and supported me and my family.”

NOT ABANDONED

Just as importantly, Mehr and her family know they aren’t abandoned. It means so much to them to know that

Thanks to you, Open Doors partners are helping Mehr with spiritual and practical help – including food aid



INDIA ATTACKED ON ALL SIDES

of support for medical bills after attacks, food relief when they lose their jobs due to discrimination, legal help, discipleship, training and business loans for the future.

We must act now to support and protect the Indian church from the attempts of extremists to wipe it out. Today, please help ensure the faith of India’s Christians isn’t shaken.

PLEASE PRAY

- For Mehr and her family to continue their recovery and be salt and light in their community
- That Open Doors local partners would be equipped to serve the persecuted church in India with wisdom and compassion
- For an end to violence and discrimination against religious minorities in India.

You can find more ways to pray for India in your prayer diary.

PLEASE GIVE

- **Every £20** could provide training for four believers, equipping them with a biblical response to persecution.
- **Every £35** could help give a persecuted Christian a loan and training, so they can open a small business and support their family and community.
- **Every £42** could provide emergency food, medicine and shelter to two believers in India affected by violent persecution.

You can make a gift at opendoorsuk.org. Thank you.



You can show Mehr, and other persecuted Christians in India, that they are not alone

“God is my strength – holy God is my fortress. May God use my testimony to strengthen my brothers and sisters.”

FORGIVENESS AND GROWTH

Mehr knows that justice is very unlikely to be done, in the case of the people who attacked her. Her family lodged a complaint with the police, but her attackers were not arrested or questioned, because of the influential position they hold in the community. Christians in many parts of India find that their accusations are disregarded – and sometimes the police even take the side of the persecutors. But Mehr is living out the command that Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount, to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

“The people who did this to me, I have forgiven them,” says Mehr. “God gave me strength so I could forgive them.” Her strong desire is that all her neighbours, even the ones who launched the vicious attack, will come to know Jesus.

Mehr has gone through a lot at a young age, but her faith is

strong and she’s dedicated to being a light for Christ in India — and has a strong vision for the future of the Indian church. “The plan that God has for my life is big. I will be used

“THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING AN ENCOURAGER IN MY LIFE”

for God’s glory. Jesus Christ is everything to me. However much persecution increases, God’s people will not decrease. No matter how much people persecute them, they will grow.”

SHOW MEHR SHE ISN’T ALONE

Mehr knows God hasn’t abandoned her – can you show Mehr, and believers like her, that her worldwide family won’t abandon them?

Open Doors partners are helping 80,000 Indian Christians with emergency relief, and providing long-term help to another 650,000. But many more vulnerable Christians in India are in urgent need



Thank you for helping faith to flourish



“The Lord your God is God; He is the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love Him and keep His commandments.” DEUTERONOMY 7:9

When I wrote this letter last year, I was able to reflect on the extraordinary generosity that Open Doors supporters showed during the Covid-19 crisis in 2020. The pandemic didn't end then, of course, but continued throughout 2021. We saw new waves of the virus and restricted freedoms across the world, and exacerbated persecution and discrimination against our global church family. And so it's amazing that levels of giving and prayer remained incredibly high throughout the year. Thank you!

In 2021 your donations were, again, significantly higher than before Covid-19, enabling Open Doors partners and fieldworkers to continue providing vital support to those who are persecuted for following Jesus. Emergency Covid aid continued, but so did Bible distribution, relief aid, trauma care, training and microloans for the long-term survival of the church.

Thank you, also, for speaking out for your persecuted family. Nearly 7,000 of you invited

your MP to the parliamentary launch of the Open Doors World Watch List 2021. Because it was online, thousands of you were able to watch as nearly 100 MPs heard first-hand from persecuted believers.

I continue to be humbled by the steadfast commitment of Open Doors supporters, without whom none of our work to support the persecuted church would be possible. As you read this annual review, please remember that every gift, every prayer, every action is enabling persecuted Christians in the most difficult of circumstances not just to stand strong, but to keep sharing Jesus, no matter the cost. Thank you so much.

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

2021 highlights

£16.5 million

was donated in support of the persecuted church

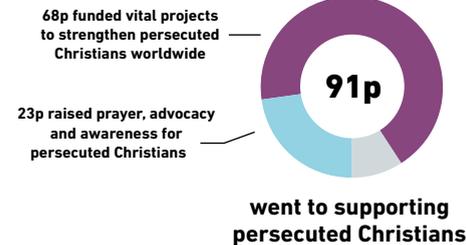
Over 102,100

people prayed regularly for the persecuted church

98 MPs

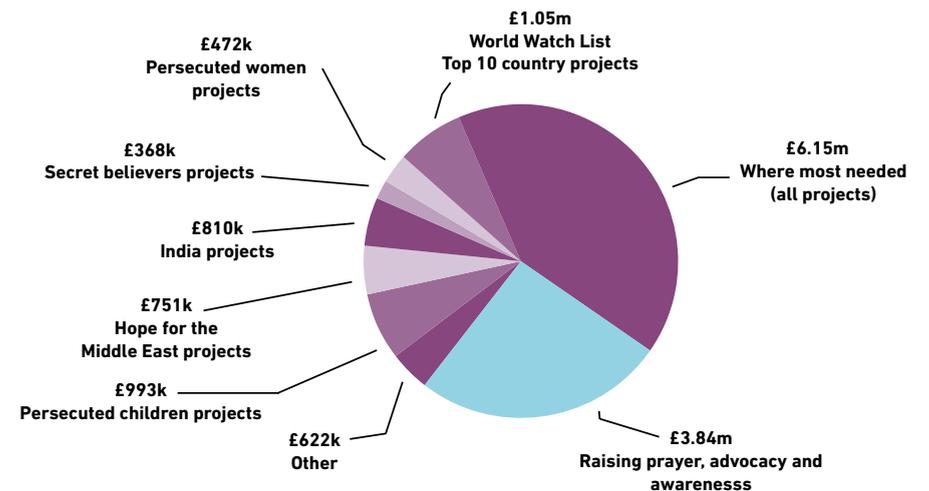
attended the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List

For every £1 you gave...



How we used your donations to support persecuted Christians

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



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.

Thanks to your faithful support throughout 2021, our persecuted family have continued to grow in their faith and boldly share it with others.

Keeping the faith where it's costliest

60,000

North Korean believers received vital food and aid through secret networks in China

"I cried out so much," writes Lady H* from North Korea on the moment she received aid, including clothes and medicine, to take back to North Korea from a safe house in China.

It wasn't the only thing Lady H took back to North Korea. "When I came out to China, I was so surprised by how many people have been praying for our believers and North Korea," she says. "I

SPOTLIGHT ON...

Each year, hundreds of you invite your MP to the World Watch List parliamentary launch – and it has an impact! In January 2021, 98 MPs attended the digital event. "There's a good number of MPs who are really invested in freedom of religion or belief," says David Linden MP (PICTURED). "I think I can speak on behalf of all of us when I say that the launch and the publication of the World Watch List galvanise us to keep going and keep challenging the issue in Parliament."



WORLD WATCH LIST PARLIAMENTARY LAUNCH

have kept the faith through your powerful prayers so far. I could experience the love of God through those who have been faithfully praying for us."

Lady H's words reflect how your prayers and support are impacting those living in the top 10 countries on the World Watch List, where persecution is most extreme.

Emerging stronger in India

730,000

persecuted Christians in India received practical or spiritual support

Another country where Christians encounter extreme persecution is India. Vinita* was visiting her pastor and his family when Hindu extremists barged in. They were all beaten and, as often happens to Christians in parts of India,

they were refused treatment at hospital by staff who were under pressure from the attackers.

Thankfully, your support meant Vinita and Preetha*, the pastor's wife, could receive medical care. Recently, Vinita shared how your continued prayers are having an impact. "I thank God that even though I had a severe head injury because of the incident, God healed me without major treatment



IMAGE Despite persecution, Vinita is growing in her faith

because of everyone's prayers," she says.

Your prayers are helping in other ways. "My faith emerged stronger after the incident," Vinita continues. "My relationship with the Lord is now even stronger and, somehow, I am finding courage to stay in the same locality."

Preetha, too, is holding onto Jesus. "I am strong in my faith," she says. "I begin my day at 5am with a one-hour prayer time and then spend a lot of time throughout the day praying. Even though I am illiterate and cannot read the Word, I listen to it."

SPOTLIGHT ON...

The India campaign provided another opportunity for you to touch base with your MPs about our persecuted family. It meant that 38 MPs attended the presentation of *Destructive Lies*, a report produced in conjunction with the London School of Economics (LSE) outlining the extreme persecution facing Christians and other religious minorities in India. Brendan O'Hara MP tweeted, "Indian Christians 'facing an existential threat' says harrowing new report from @OpenDoorsUK. Now 10th most dangerous place in world to be Christian, due to rise in extreme Hindu religious nationalism. I've promised to raise issue in parliament, with High Commission & tech giants."



ADVOCACY

Women given hope and dignity

1,120,000

persecuted women and girls were given vital support

Your support is giving women who are targeted for their faith and gender the tools to thrive in their God-given identities and callings.

This includes over 500 women who've completed a discipleship course created by Humaira*, who heads up Open Doors' advocacy training for women in Asia. Despite a Christian upbringing that enabled her to flourish, negative attitudes towards women were always close at hand in the society where Humaira grew up. She

especially felt this when her mother-in-law was blamed for the conversion of her son to Christianity. "I feel, tragically, that this was the



IMAGE Humaira teaching a class (RIGHT) and some of her core discipleship team for the region (LEFT)

main factor which caused her to suffer a fatal stroke and pass away," Humaira says.

These experiences have fed into the three-year discipleship course. "My dream is to see all women, especially women in the

persecuted church, well-rooted in the faith they have embraced and living with hope and dignity," Humaira says. "The course is currently being offered to women in five countries in South East Asia.

Driving forward with God

155,000

persecuted Christians received practical aid or livelihood support in the Middle East and North Africa

Hope is fertile ground for faith to grow, and that's certainly the case in the Middle East, where your support for our *Hope for the Middle East* campaign is having a tremendous impact.

This includes 25-year-old Elias from Syria, whose leg had to be amputated after he was caught up in a missile strike while on obligatory military service. The compensation he received from the government was 190,000 Syrian pounds

(around £62). "It wasn't even enough to buy some basic things for my house," he says. It's here you stepped in. Through a church that's a Centre of Hope, Elias was approved for a microloan to buy a car to start working as a taxi driver. "This car gives me a decent income," he says. "I have my house because of the car. I can afford to buy the



IMAGE Elias leaning on the taxi you enabled him to buy

food we need because of the car." Your support also helped fund a prosthetic leg for Elias.

"God is training me every day, with every experience," Elias continues. "God turned the bad in something to my benefit. God has a plan in every situation."

Bright hope for tomorrow

411,000

persecuted children received practical or spiritual support

Your support for children of the persecuted church is helping take care of today's needs and tomorrow's hopes – which, in turn, is

SPOTLIGHT ON...



In 2021, Open Doors hosted five prayer webinars to coincide with different campaigns. Together they drew more than 5,500 viewers. In September, around 4,500 of you tuned into Standing Strong Online (PICTURED). "Truly inspirational and challenging evening," shared Alan Sheppard on Facebook, while Anne Rodgers wrote, "Tremendous to think that our prayers are an encouragement to those persecuted for their faith."

WEBINARS AND STANDING STRONG ONLINE

SPOTLIGHT ON...



More than 120 supporters raised over £106,000 through various fundraising challenges. This includes Ezra, Caleb, Boaz and Ariela Leithall (PICTURED), who raised £110 through a cake and treat sale. Many of you contributed in other ways – be it as an Activist, Advocacy Rep or Events Volunteer, or a Speaker or Prayer Group Leader. Thank you!

FUNDRAISING AND VOLUNTEERING

SPOTLIGHT ON...



Each year, hundreds of you write to our persecuted family. "I thought no one was thinking about us", says Taher* (PICTURED), a secret believer from the Middle East. "By sending us these cards, you've proven to me that there are lots of people thinking about us and praying for us."

LETTER WRITING

contributing to the future health of the global church.

Aged 14, Soy* from Laos was one of 14 believers imprisoned for six days for refusing to stop worshipping Jesus. Even when pressured to renounce their faith in prison, Soy and the others refused. They were later released but the persecution continued for Soy. She was bullied by her friends and even ignored by her teachers. "I felt scared, hopeless and lonely," Soy recalls.

To continue her studies, Soy moved to the city where your generosity has been an enormous help. "I am thankful to my brothers and sisters from around the globe," she says. "Because of God's love, I received financial support to buy food and school supplies to continue my studies. Without you, I would not be able to continue my studies."



IMAGE You're helping look after Soy's future

Thank you!

Thank you for your faithful support for our persecuted family. Despite increasing opposition in many places around the world, the church is not only surviving, but thriving. As these stories and

statistics show, the role you play in this is staggering, and reflects not only your love for the global church but the way our persecuted family inspires your own faith.

Please continue to pray for our family who follow Jesus,

no matter the cost, and those serving them. And please stay connected with them. One way you can do this, if you haven't already, is by subscribing to our regular emails at opendoorsuk.org/subscribe

*Names changed for security reasons

STANDING STRONG

BOOK NOW

ANNUAL GATHERING 2022

Saturday 24 September, 7.30pm
Trent Vineyard, Nottingham, NG7 2PX
In-person and online event



Father Daniel,
Iraq

MEET YOUR COURAGEOUS PERSECUTED CHURCH FAMILY FROM ASIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

This September, you're invited to meet your persecuted church family as we celebrate all that God is doing through His church around the world! Hear stories first-hand from Christians in Asia and the Middle East and pray and worship with believers from all over the UK and Ireland – both in-person and online.

After two years of being solely online, we're delighted to be able to invite you to attend Standing Strong in-person this year. As well as the main evening event, there will also be afternoon seminars (in-person only) where you can get up

close and personal with our speakers, ask them questions and find out more about how they are following Jesus in the face of persecution.

"It was truly inspiring and made me recommit to praying and giving for all that you do. It is very humbling to hear the stories we heard. We can learn so much from our brothers and sisters in those countries."

STANDING STRONG 2021
ATTENDEE

If, however, you are not able to attend in-person, you can also stream live from your living room or church on the night.

MEET FATHER DANIEL
Father (now Bishop) Daniel from Iraq will be one of the speakers at both the evening event and the seminars. He has experienced persecution for his faith since childhood – but he is committed to rebuilding and encouraging the church in Iraq to stand firm and keep proclaiming the gospel in their communities.

Father Daniel was only a young priest in Erbil when, in 2014, so-called Islamic State (IS) invaded large parts of the country. But he courageously stayed behind to take care of the believers and refugees who wouldn't – or couldn't – flee. "My church became a shelter for more than 1,600 families – Christian families," he says.

Through Open Doors' *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, you've helped thousands of Christians return to and rebuild their communities in Iraq, where they've been able to share the hope of Jesus with those around them.

"Your supporters helped us from the beginning to go through all of these dark times," Father Daniel says. "And they were the light which came to us from nowhere. They helped us through so many projects which gave hope to us, like the trauma healing training and the leadership training, and also the Bible studies and so many other activities that we've done with their help."

This year, Iraq is number 14 on the World Watch List. While IS have lost ground, militants are still very much active, and Christians continue to face

threats and persecution from them. Believers also face discrimination from government authorities.

"We ask our brothers and sisters not to forget us and to stay in solidarity with us," Father Daniel says. "We ask the global church to pray for us and to support us and to speak on our behalf."

You can hear more of Father Daniel's story, and how your prayers and support are helping our persecuted church family in Iraq to stand

strong, by joining us this September – book your tickets today! Go to opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong



REGISTER TODAY FOR STANDING STRONG 2022

Exclusive in-person afternoon seminars: 3pm
Evening event (in-person and online): 7.30pm

TICKETS

In-person event (includes seminars): £10pp

Scan the QR code to book your place or go to opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong

Spaces are limited at Trent Vineyard, so book early to avoid disappointment.

We look forward to seeing you there!

VOICES OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Kamala from Nepal



ABOVE Kamala knows that prayer changes things – thank you for praying with her

*Name changed for security reasons

Kamala*, 26, was born into a Hindu community in Nepal, but was raised as a Christian when her father came to faith. When Kamala was older, she chose to marry a Hindu man who seemed tolerant of her Christian beliefs – although her parents did not approve the match. When she was married, Kamala stopped attending church altogether in favour of Hindu rituals and traditions.

TURNING BACK TO GOD

Kamala found that she was unhappy in her marriage; her husband had affairs with other women, and she suffered several miscarriages. "All these things made me reckless, and my heart was not at peace," she recalls. But God had not forgotten Kamala. One day, she received a call from her mother. "She told me that the pastor had dreamed that I was told to return to my Christian faith. I was fed up with my current life. I decided to repent and return to my faith."

Kamala began going to church again, but in secret. She left behind the Hindu rituals and recommitted her life to Jesus! But when her husband and in-laws found out, they began to abuse her, physically and mentally. She asked for a divorce, and

went to her parents' home to escape the abuse, but her husband found her and beat her. Even Kamala's brother began to mistreat her.

That's when you stepped in to help. Local Open Doors partners were able to help Kamala start a tailoring business and get financial independence. She's even using the business to share the gospel with her customers.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Kamala knows that prayer is powerful – and she knows that the prayers of others turned her life around. "Life without prayer is meaningless," she says. "I feel easy and light in my heart after sharing everything with God in my prayers. I have also received answers to my prayers that have increased my faith and trust in Him.

"The best part of prayer is it makes us feel that we are never alone. When I left my family, my parents and church members did not hate me. Instead, they kept praying for me, which has made me feel that God is with me. I feel love from God and His people."



WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH?



READ

"...Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens." - Hebrews 7:24-26



REFLECT

Kamala looks back on her trials and sees that God was never far from her because her family and her church continued to pray for her.

Where can you see the effects of the prayers of others on your life – in particular, in your challenges and difficulties?

Jesus 'always lives to intercede' for us. How are you encouraged to pray for others, knowing that Jesus prays for you?



RESPOND

Interceding – praying for others – can be difficult to persevere in, particularly if the situations and people we bring before God don't seem to change. But it's an amazing opportunity to partner with God in bringing about His kingdom, and opening ourselves up to being transformed in the process. Spend some time asking God who He is encouraging you to pray (or continue praying) for, and ask for the strength to persevere.



HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR NEPAL WORLD WATCH LIST #48

1 PRAY FOR CONVERTS

Christians from a Hindu background are the largest group of believers in Nepal and their numbers are continuing to grow. These believers experience the highest levels of persecution, with pressure coming from local government officials, Hindu priests, family and community.

Heavenly Father, thank You that more and more people in Nepal are encountering You. Help them to stand strong in their faith and embolden them to share the hope they have in You with others. Amen.

2 PRAY FOR DAILY LIFE

Daily life remains hard for Nepalese Christians. Despite a decrease in violence, pressure in almost every sphere of life went up. Anti-conversion laws and the destruction and forced closures of churches contribute to limiting religious freedom.

Lord Jesus, strengthen our sisters and brothers facing daily discrimination and rejection. Give wisdom and strength to Open Doors partners as they serve the Nepalese church. Amen.

3 PRAY FOR THE CHURCH

There's no legal recognition of churches in Nepal. Since the passing of anti-conversion laws, surveillance of Christian activities by local councils and Hindu community members has increased. Local authorities are suspicious of charitable work for fear of conversion activities taking place.

Holy Spirit, help believers to find safe places where they can meet and worship. Comfort and encourage isolated Christians; may they know that they are not alone. Amen.



Be inspired by more courageous faith stories like Kamala's and find out how to pray for your persecuted church family in the 50 countries where following Jesus costs the most with your free *Open Doors World Watch List Top 50* booklet. Order today at opendoorsuk.org/wwl



MOCKED BEATEN UNSHAKEN

Mehr* in India was attacked from all sides. Her neighbours assaulted her. Doctors and nurses refused to treat her. All because of her Christian faith.

Open Doors partners are supporting Mehr's medical treatment, paying her hospital bills and providing financial help and trauma care for the long-term. Many others also need your urgent help.

Every £42 could provide emergency food, medicine and shelter to two believers in India affected by violent persecution.

Give today, and help ensure Christians in India remain unshaken in their faith, by returning the enclosed envelope, phoning **01993 460015** or visiting **opendoorsuk.org**. Thank you.

**Name changed for security reasons*

INDIA ATTACKED ON ALL SIDES

 **OpenDoors**