

Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | November/December 2022

Hope at Christmas

You can show persecuted
children that they're family





words of peace

OPEN DOORS 2022 CHRISTMAS RESOURCES

Share words of peace with your church this Christmas. Our 2022 carol sheet features messages from children of the persecuted church. And you can send them a message with a Christmas card large enough for your whole church to sign.

- Carol sheet featuring children of the persecuted church
- Extra-large card for everyone to sign and send
- Downloadable videos, youth session and children's activity

Order today at opendoorsuk.org/christmas



Open Doors

Prayer Webinar

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL | 1 DECEMBER | 8PM

Join a Christmas special of the Open Doors prayer webinar to hear about the children of the persecuted church. Around the world, Christmas is a joyful time – but also a time when these children are particularly vulnerable. Our young brothers and sisters love when we join in prayer for them – hope you can join us!

Find out more and register today at opendoorsuk.org

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 460015.



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: Elizabeth (6) lives at the Colombia Children's Centre, where her parents are members of staff

Letter from Henrietta

Christmas blessings

“Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold” PSALM 8:2

In recent weeks, we at Open Doors have been grieving the death of our founder, Brother Andrew. I know that many of you were also very impacted by his life and work. Enclosed, alongside this magazine, you'll find a commemorative booklet that celebrates Brother Andrew's extraordinary life of service.

Brother Andrew lived into his 90s – but the same courageous faith is clear in children eight decades younger. I was recently asked why I believe it's so important to support the children of the persecuted church. There's an obvious answer – that they're the future of the church. That, without our support, Christian communities might not survive in some of the most difficult places to follow Jesus. And while that's absolutely true, I don't think it's the whole answer.

While I was thinking about my answer, I was really struck by Psalm 8:2: “Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.” That's not about children becoming powerful warriors for Christ in the future – it's about right now. Children like Valentina in Colombia (see p6) know what it means to suffer for their faith, but can boldly say “I know that, in the middle of persecution, God is faithful and merciful.”

Christmas is a time when the children of the persecuted church are particularly vulnerable to alienation or attack. But whatever we are facing – whether changes in government and Head of State, economic challenges here in the UK and Ireland, or the everyday persecution and discrimination experienced by Valentina and millions of other vulnerable Christian children, men and women – the answer is still to fix our eyes on Jesus. It's a lesson we never stop learning. I'm grateful to be reminded of it by Valentina, by Brother Andrew and by so many others.

Thank you so much for your support this year, it makes such a difference. Every blessing to you and your loved ones this Christmas.



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

P.S. Don't forget you can invite your MP to the Open Doors World Watch List parliamentary launch in January, using your enclosed postcard. It's vital to keep Christian persecution on the agenda and continue to work for a positive shift on freedom of religion or belief.

World Watch News

BANGLADESH

“I am so grateful for this blessing”



A Christian man from Bangladesh is making a fresh start with his family after experiencing persecution from his own mother.

A couple of years after becoming a Christian, Doni* and his family returned to his hometown to live with his mother, because of the pandemic, and what greeted them was intense hostility.

Doni's mother intimidated the family using tactics that included hiding food, verbal abuse and teaching Doni's son Islamic prayers. Doni's family returned to the city where Open Doors local partners have helped provide rent, household goods and funds to start a new snack business.

“I am so grateful for this blessing,” Doni shares. “After everything we've been through, you have no idea how much this means to me and my family.”

Please pray that the new business will flourish and that Doni's mother will open her heart to Jesus.

INDIA

Six Christian women arrested at birthday party

Six Christian women in India were arrested during a birthday party following accusations of carrying out forced conversions.

About 100 believers were attending a gathering in Uttar Pradesh State when it was raided by members of a local Hindu extremist group, who recorded the guests and confiscated Bibles and songbooks. These extremists then filed a complaint with the police, using what they'd taken as so-called 'proof' that the women were forcing others to become Christian.

The six women – most of whom are from very poor financial backgrounds – were denied bail. Their lawyer believes this is because of 'political pressure'.

They are among the increasing number of Christians being targeted using anti-conversion laws that have now been passed in 11 states in India.

Please pray that these six women will be acquitted of all charges, and that the anti-conversion laws in many parts of India would no longer be abused.

PAKISTAN

Devastating floods plunge country into further chaos

The recent devastating floods have further plunged Pakistan into chaos and uncertainty.

The disaster has stripped many believers of their safe havens. The level of hunger has reached a point where the rule of law holds no power over the people. Some even resort to stealing food from their neighbours.

Minorities, especially Christians, who are neglected even in normal circumstances, are now in a dire state. Even in this vulnerable position, Christians are in constant fear of false accusations of religious crimes, forced conversions and abductions.

To worsen things, displaced people with nowhere to go are exposed to criminals and violent groups. Christians are now in the open with no one to protect them from religious extremists.

“We need your prayers,” shares Bashira*, a local. “We ask our Father to make a way for these affected people to be reached, given shelter, food and a dry place to stay as they wait for the water levels to recede.”

“We ask you to pray for those who are serving the displaced and scared at this time,” adds Hina*, a local who is helping. “Nothing brings sweeter joy than beginning to wipe tears.”

MEXICO

11-year-old boy excited to follow parents' example



An 11-year-old boy from Mexico is excited to learn about Jesus, knowing that a relationship with God is worth the persecution he's witnessed.

Esteban (LEFT) and his parents have been threatened and had their basic services cut off, and his parents were arrested whilst celebrating their son's sixth birthday.

The three of them currently attend a Bible Training Centre run by Open Doors local partners. Esteban is very

excited to learn about the Bible because he wants to follow the example set by his parents. It's an enthusiasm reflected in a short video clip where he sings, “There is no higher place, than to be at Your feet, than to be at Your feet.”

The funding of youth projects, like the one attended by Esteban, comes in part from generous legacy donations. Find out more about leaving a legacy in your Will at opendoorsuk.org/legacy



UK

Football network helps tackle persecution

Ballers in God (BIG), a network that supports professional and semi-professional Christian footballers in their faith, has raised more than £1,800 for our persecuted family through profits from merchandise sales.

“Football is a worldwide platform that we desire to use to advance God's kingdom,” said John Bostock, BIG's founder (ABOVE). “We are passionate about partnering with Open Doors and have been greatly encouraged by their work. It's fantastic to see

their impact throughout the world in helping brothers and sisters facing persecution for their faith.”

John Bostock features in a video raising awareness of the seven countries participating in the World Cup that are on the World Watch List. Watch the video and order your free World Cup resources, including prayer diary and wall chart, at opendoorsuk.org/worldcup

*Names changed for security reasons



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



Valentina loves going home for Christmas. But she knows it wouldn't be safe to live there.

If you were to ask Valentina her favourite thing about Christmas, it wouldn't be the decorations on the tree, the food or even the presents. She loves all those things, like any 15-year-old. But her favourite thing? "For me, the best Christmas is when I'm with my family."

Most children live with their family all year round. But Valentina can't. Christmas is one of the only times when she gets to spend time with her family. It's not that her parents Francisco and Luz don't want her at home – but, rather, that being

a Christian is really dangerous in Cauca, their Colombian town. And children are particularly at risk.

"I felt that I had no freedom where I lived," shares Valentina. "I always wanted to leave. I used to say, 'My God, I want to get out of here. I don't even know where I want to go, but I want to leave.'"

PERSECUTION IN COLOMBIA

What makes living in Cauca so difficult? While the population of Colombia is overwhelmingly Christian, there are still areas where following Jesus is dangerous. Those who convert from indigenous beliefs or oppose

CHRISTMAS APPEAL

the activities of criminal groups are particularly at risk. That's why Colombia is number 30 on the Open Doors World Watch List. Persecution started when Valentina's father took a stand for religious freedom, for his family and for all the other Christians in the region.

“Thank God there was an open door at the Children's Centre”

In Cauca, the population and the local authorities are predominantly from an indigenous community that practises occult rituals and is openly hostile to Christians. The Cauca Indigenous Regional Council (CIRC) was actively trying to close churches and impose indigenous rites in schools, including the one Valentina attended. Francisco – a church leader – felt called to start an indigenous Christian council. “We wanted to create it

so that our children would have a Christian education,” he says. These councils are a vital way of getting access to all the help the government can offer.

The CIRC were furious. In response, they tried to take away basic rights from the family. “When we left CIRC, they told the Education Department that we had no right to education or healthcare,” Francisco says. Other local Christian children were also being denied the chance to go to school.

And that wasn't the only problem. As well as having freedoms taken away from them, the family were threatened by local guerrilla groups. In Colombia, these guerrilla groups target prominent Christians in the community – particularly church leaders – because these believers stand against corruption and protect children from being coerced into joining the cartels. “The guerrillas

Francisco (BELOW) and Luz (ABOVE) know that serving Jesus in Colombia could put their family in danger



were looking to recruit children as young as 12 years old,” says Francisco. He knew that Valentina and her siblings were at risk.

“AN OPEN DOOR”

This is where Open Doors supporters like you stepped in. Because it's not safe for children such as Valentina to live in dangerous areas, their parents often make the difficult decision to send them somewhere much safer: the Children's Centre, run by Open Doors partners.

“We sought help to get our children out, as desperate parents,” says Francisco. “Thank God there was an open door at the Children's Centre.”

At the Children's Centre, Valentina is able to get Christian education and support. She doesn't face any threats or harassment. She won't be



“I was sad, because I missed my family, but now I don't want to leave the Children's Centre.”

Valentina is getting Christian education in safety at the Colombia Children's Centre

targeted for following Jesus. And though she can't be with her family, all the other children at the centre have become like a family for her.

“I was sad, because I missed my family, but now I don't want to leave the Children's Centre,” she says. “I don't know if my life would exist if I still lived in Cauca, or if I'd be lost.”

WORTH THE SACRIFICE

Sending their child away to the other side of the country was a difficult decision for Francisco and Luz to make. They wouldn't have done it if there had been a safe alternative – but they knew

it was the right thing to do for Valentina's future. Some of the dangers the family face would have gone away if Francisco had stopped defending religious freedoms, and stopped sharing the gospel in his community. But he knows that it's a price worth paying in order to obey God.

“We were feeling sad to send our daughter so far away that we couldn't see her, but happy at the same time knowing that she wasn't in danger anymore,” says Francisco. He also loves knowing that she is part of a Christian community. “They are prepared, not just academically but also biblically. So they are

getting closer to God, and that's great for them and for us.”

Valentina has spent four years at the Children's Centre so far, and her life has been radically transformed. “When I got to the centre, I said ‘Thank you, God – because

I didn't have this in mind, but You brought me here,” she remembers. “I love visiting home, but I don't want to stay there.”

A GLOBAL PROBLEM

Some of Valentina's story is unique to her region. But other parts of it would be familiar to hundreds of thousands of Christian children across the world. In many countries, these children face persecution because of their faith – either because they are directly targeted, or because they suffer when their families are persecuted.

“Persecution shapes a child's identity,” says Helene Fisher, an Open Doors researcher who has spent years investigating and analysing the persecution of children and young people from religious minorities. “Are they somebody of value? Are they somebody who has a place in society? Are they somebody who has a professional future? And so many times the answer is no.”

MIMI IN IRAQ

For Mimi in Iraq, persecution targeted her whole family when



CHRISTMAS APPEAL

she was very young. She is 12 now, but was only four years old when her family had to flee so-called Islamic State (IS). "At about two in the morning, the extremists of IS entered the village," Mimi's mother, Nadia, says. "It's been many years now and these voices are still in my ears. I think I will keep remembering that moment until I die."

Nadia tried to protect Mimi from these horrifying memories, like any parent would. They found a safe place to stay, with six other families, and that's what Mimi remembers from those days. "We sat down, and Nana put some cartoons on TV so that we wouldn't be scared," she says. "I was just sitting there. Later, my father came to be with us as well. That made me very happy."

Life is still hard for Mimi and her family in Iraq, where Christians continue to face persecution and discrimination. Valentina's situation is different in many ways – but similar enough that the two girls, living thousands of miles apart, can understand and support each other. They even managed to write to each other, via Open

Mimi was only four years old when her family had to flee Islamic militants in Iraq. A microloan from Open Doors partners means the family has been able to start a farm



Doors partners (see p11) – and you can write, too.

HOW YOU ARE HELPING

The problems faced by Christian children are diverse and complex, and so the solutions need to be, too. Around the world, Open Doors partners respond with context-specific programmes to support, protect and encourage persecuted Christian children.

“With God, nothing is impossible... I know He can help me”

Sometimes that means a programme specifically aimed at children, like the Colombia Children's Centre. In other scenarios, a programme will bless a child by strengthening a whole family. In Mimi's case, a microloan from Open Doors partners in Iraq means her family have been able to start and run a farm. It has helped secure their long-term future in the country, as well as Mimi's future – keeping a light of Christ in a dark place.

Your gifts and prayers help ensure the survival of the church in places where following Jesus comes with the most risk. But it's not just about the future – it's about today, too. And today, hundreds of thousands of persecuted Christian children need to know that they have a worldwide family who are standing beside them.

VALENTINA'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

Valentina has a message for all the other children like her, facing persecution because of their faith: "For those people who are being persecuted, I would tell them not to leave their faith. If they are still here, it's because God has a purpose for them, even though we don't see it immediately."

She knows she faces ongoing danger, but her hope for the future remains strong. She wants to study art when she leaves the children's centre, and dreams of one day travelling and meeting many people to share her experiences, and to spread the gospel. "With God, nothing is impossible," she says. "I know He can help me."

One way God helps Valentina, and so many children like her, is through your gifts and prayers. This Christmas, can you show these courageous young believers that you are their family, and they are yours?

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's strength and hope for Valentina and Mimi and their parents, and all families of believers who can't be together because of persecution
- Praise God for all He continues to do to support persecuted Christian children through Open Doors local partners
- That this Christmas would be a time when the gospel is abundantly shared and received in places of darkness.

PLEASE GIVE

- **Every £22** could give a month of education to a child impacted by persecution.
- **Every £32** could give Bibles to four children, so they can meet God in His Word.
- **Every £59** could mean a child of a persecuted church leader gets a month of shelter and protection at the Colombia Children's Centre.

You can give online at opendoorsuk.org.

PLEASE WRITE

This Christmas, you can encourage Valentina and other children at the Colombia Children's Centre by writing them a message of encouragement. It would mean so much to them to hear from their worldwide family. Find all the details about how you can send a letter of hope at opendoorsuk.org/write



Valentina and Mimi

Valentina in Colombia and Mimi in Iraq have been able to write letters to each other – sharing their experiences, and giving each other hope for the future. It has given the girls a chance to feel part of a global family of believers.

> You can watch a video of the two girls at opendoorsuk.org

Dear Valentina,
When I heard your story, I was angry about what happened to you, I know how you feel - because we, the Christians in Iraq, have also been persecuted.
Love, Mimi

Dear Mimi,
I know that, in the middle of persecution, God is faithful and merciful. He is the best because He takes care of us. It's Jesus who unites us and means we can enjoy peace and hope.
Love, Valentina



> You can write your own letter to Valentina at opendoorsuk.org/write

CHRISTMAS

THROUGH THE LENS OF CHILDREN OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

In many countries, Christian children celebrate Christmas in the shadow of conflict and persecution. Despite this, the festive season remains a time of joy and excitement as they remember the birth of Jesus. You can meet these courageous children in photos and quotes from Colombia, Egypt, Iran and more...

COLOMBIA



Elizabeth (6) is from Colombia. Her parents work at the Children's Centre run by Open Doors local partners. "When it's dark, Jesus makes sure I don't fall," she says.

NEPAL



This year, Chantin (11) from Nepal – where Christians can face persecution from Hindu extremists – is looking forward to dancing and singing with her Christmas carol group. "Jesus gave me a peaceful life and a beautiful family," she says.

IRAN



Kaaren (13) is from Iran but had to flee to Turkey when he was five. "In the difficult moments, the only thing that helped us was Jesus who strengthened us to endure," he shares. "He enlightened the dark path that we have been on."

SYRIA



Despite growing up knowing war and persecution, Sham (11) from Syria always looks forward to Christmas. If she could write those who persecute Christians a letter, she'd write, "God loves and wants to give His light to us, but you want to destroy it, why do you want that? God can light up your lives as well if you want to let Him do that."

EGYPT



Irene (11) lives in Egypt, where Christians are typically treated as second-class citizens. "Jesus is love and my country needs love," she says. "All our problems come from a lack of love. I pray that God touches the hearts of all people and that peace and love will be in Egypt."

WORDS OF PEACE

Hear more from children of the persecuted church, and share them with your church, through *Words of Peace*. This new suite of Christmas resources includes a carol sheet, videos and an activity for children and families. Order your free copies at opendoorsuk.org/christmas



A RAY OF HOPE

HOW GOD'S LIGHT SHONE THROUGH YOUR SUPPORT IN 2022

RIGHT Your prayers and support sustained Ferial when she needed it most – and now she is helping local children in Syria grow in their faith



Thank you for all the ways you have continued to encourage, sustain and strengthen our persecuted brothers and sisters in 2022. "The help and intervention of Open Doors partners is like a ray of hope peeping through the dark tunnel," says Kanak* from India. Here's just a glimpse of the amazing difference you've made for persecuted Christians around the world this year.

INDIA

"God's light shined through your help"

Kanak and her husband Peter* were meeting with their church in their home when Hindu extremists burst in. Wielding sticks and metal rods, they beat Kanak, Peter and the other Christians.

Peter called the police who put a stop to the attack. But Kanak and Peter could no longer stay in the area. "I had to leave the place where God called me to ministry; I had to let go of my people who were like family to me," Kanak says. "I felt like I had come to the end of a tunnel." But thanks to your prayers and gifts, local Open Doors partners came alongside Kanak and Peter with practical and spiritual support as they rebuild

their lives and ministry in a new place. "Certainly, God's light shined through your help," Kanak says. "I thank the organisation [Open Doors] for helping my family in our time of need and assuring us of your constant prayers and encouragement."

CHILDREN

"I am longing for Christmas to come"

In 2019, we introduced you to Jina and her son, Apo (RIGHT), from Syria. Jina's husband, Rober, was kidnapped in 2013 by Islamic extremists while on a work trip because he's a Christian.

Your prayers and support meant that Jina and Apo (now ten years old) have received much-needed practical and

spiritual support through a Centre of Hope, supported by Open Doors. Apo spends time with other Christian children at the centre, playing games. "What I like most at school is the sports class," he says.

Thanks to you, Jina is also flourishing in a new job at a beauty salon.



Jina says Apo is thriving because he's able to channel all of his energy into sports. "I thank you who supported me from the bottom of my heart," she says. "I pray that God will bless you and will open new doors for you to continue to help us in Syria."

WEST AFRICA

"If you had not helped us, we would have lost our faith"

When Mariama from Niger (RIGHT) chose to follow Jesus, her family turned against her, cutting her off financially. "I faced a lot of challenges, and my siblings and relatives showed me hatred," she says.

It's hard for many Nigeriens to make ends meet; families survive by pooling resources. But when they turn their backs on Islam, Christians, by implication, also turn their backs on the support of their family and wider community.

"If you had not helped us, we would have lost our faith."

But Mariama was not alone for long. Thanks to your support, local Open Doors partners in Niger gave her vocational training to help her earn a living. They provided her with a small loan, which she used to start up a farm. "Thanks to your help, we've bought chickens, goats and cows," she says. "We even use these animals to help other people to start their own businesses. If you had not helped us, we would have lost our faith, because of our difficult situation. Thank you, may God bless you."

ADVOCACY: PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS HEARD IN PARLIAMENT

Despite political changes, this has been an amazing year for advocacy. By raising your voice, you're making the voices of our persecuted brothers and sisters heard in the corridors of power. In January, over 90 MPs attended the online World Watch List launch, where they heard from Christians in China and Africa. Fiona Bruce MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), attended the Digital Persecution Conference in March to hear the talks and raise issues in government afterwards (BELOW). And many of you invited your MP to the FoRB Ministerial in July, which made it possible to put the issue of digital persecution on the main agenda and raised Nigeria and gender-specific religious persecution as key issues. Thank you! Please keep praying for the UK Government's ongoing engagement with religious freedom around the world.

STANDING STRONG 2022

Hundreds of Open Doors supporters gathered both in-person and online for our annual Standing Strong event! This year we met with Hanna*



from Asia, and Bishop (formerly Father) Daniel from Iraq, who shared what's happening to the persecuted church in these places – but also how encouraged believers are by your prayers and support. "Our people will forget about ISIS, who persecuted them," Bishop Daniel said. "But we will not forget the people who stood with us. We will not ever forget the support that you made to our people, the prayers that you prayed for our people." You can catch up with the evening event at opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong

THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for all that you've done for the persecuted church this year. Your prayers, gifts and actions are continually 'refreshing the hearts' (Philemon 7) of our brothers and sisters living for Jesus in places where faith costs the most.

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.

*Names changed for security reasons



THIS CHRISTMAS, SEND

words of peace

TO COLOMBIA



In a world riddled with uncertainty, pain and conflict, discover how children of the persecuted church are celebrating Jesus, our Prince of Peace, this Christmas.

Christmas is a time when we exchange messages with those we love. Whether it's a phone or video call with family on the other side of the world, or a card popped through the door of our neighbours and friends, the season remains an opportunity to share messages of goodwill and hope, love and peace.

And this year, using Open Doors' new suite of free Christmas resources called *Words of Peace*, you can share messages of peace with your persecuted church family.

MESSAGES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

As in previous years, you can order or download a Christmas service sheet featuring readings, prayers and much-loved carols, alongside messages and wishes from children of the persecuted church in places including Colombia, North Africa and Egypt. The sheet is ideal for carol services, small groups or carol singing out and about in your local community.

Words of Peace also invites you to send messages to children using an extra-large foldout Christmas card. The idea is to use the service sheets to introduce people to the theme of peace (you might also like to share the story and video of Valentina – see pages 6-11), before asking them to write a message on the card. Return it to us and we will forward your messages to persecuted Christian children in Colombia.

"We thank God and each of the people who wrote to us. It is a beautiful gift."

- DANIELA, COLOMBIA

Many of you have previously written to our persecuted family in Colombia, including Alba and her children Daniela (14) and Sebastián (7), who were featured in Open Doors' 2020 Christmas campaign. The two children spent time at the Children's Centre after their father was killed for speaking out against organised crime and helping prevent young people from being recruited to gangs.

"We just received the letters and we are speechless," Daniela said. "We thank God and each of the people who wrote to us."

It is a beautiful gift. The three of us are very excited to read the letters. What a joy to know that you continue to pray for us."

CELEBRATE OUR PRINCE OF PEACE

Words of Peace is all about how Jesus can bring us peace, despite outward circumstances. Our Christmas celebrations this year offer a wonderful opportunity to remind the world of the comforting presence of Emmanuel, God with us. It's a message needed today as much as it was 2,000 years ago.

You can order or download your *Words of Peace* resources – which also include material for youth, families and children – at opendoorsuk.org/christmas

The new Christmas resource also includes a takeaway 'thank you' postcard to help remind you to keep praying for courageous believers.



IT'S THE WORLD CUP - SO LET'S TACKLE PERSECUTION

The run up to Christmas this year will feel unusual for many people because the men's football World Cup is taking place during the winter rather than summer.

The global popularity of the tournament presents a precious opportunity to draw attention to our persecuted church family, with seven of the participating countries appearing on the World Watch List. This includes hosts Qatar, where indigenous believers can face persecution if their faith is discovered.

Here's how you can help to 'tackle persecution' using our World Cup-themed resources for all ages...

WORLD CUP PRAYER DIARY
Every day of the group stage features one or more countries from the World Watch List. Will you pray when they play? In your World Cup prayer diary you'll find prayer points for the first two weeks of the tournament, together with either an inspirational story or background information, to help you support Christians in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Mexico.

YOUTH WALL CHART
It's the World Cup, so of course you must have a wall chart! But this is a wall chart with a difference. Alongside the fixtures are prayers for each of

the seven countries from the World Watch List, stories and facts from those nations, and simple fundraising ideas.

STICKER ALBUM

Who doesn't love a footie sticker album? We've created a unique album which focuses on countries where we really need to tackle persecution. It's great for children, families and even adults! Each day of the first two weeks features prayers and facts, together with spaces to colour in football kits and put in your stickers.

You can order these resources at opendoorsuk.org/worldcup

THE WORLD WATCH LIST COUNTRIES IN THE 2022 FIFA WORLD CUP

- Iran (9)
- Saudi Arabia (11)
- Qatar (18)
- Morocco (27)
- Tunisia (35)
- Mexico (43)
- Cameroon (44)



VOICES OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Maria from India

BELOW Maria now runs a clothing business thanks to support from local Open Doors partners

When Maria* became a Christian, she knew she would face opposition from her Hindu husband and in-laws – so she initially kept her faith secret. But after several months, her husband found out.

She was beaten, tortured and made to worship Hindu idols by her in-laws. There were even times when she was denied food and water.

Maria stayed in this situation for as long as she could – but her husband made an ultimatum: “When my husband saw my ceaseless love of God, he warned me to leave Christ or leave him,” she shares.

“Seeing no way out, I chose to hang on to Christ and free myself from an abusive relationship.



“For fear of society, I endured all the suffering and torture caused by my husband and in-laws, but constantly I was threatened and told to leave Christ,” she continues. “I was constantly praying to God to protect me and show His mercy. It was only through His grace and favour that I was able to get through those tough times.”

“GOD HAS NEVER ABANDONED ME”

Finding a job was hard – but Open Doors partners heard about Maria and helped her start a clothing business from her home! “I am so happy and thankful to God that He constantly keeps reminding of how great His love is and that His love never runs out on me,” Maria says. “All I have is Christ and His love and nothing in this world can be compared to Him.”

Her faith in God is stronger than ever. “I am self-assured and directed to Isaiah 41:10: ‘Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.’ Certainly, God has strengthened me and never abandoned me and in every critical situation He vindicated me.”

*Name changed for security reasons



HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR INDIA WORLD WATCH LIST #10

1 PRAY FOR PROTECTION

Many Christians in India are experiencing increasing violence from Hindu extremists. Pray that God will protect His people from attacks, and transform the hearts of those bent on doing evil.

2 PRAY FOR STRENGTH

Maria says, “Nothing in this world can be compared to [Jesus].” Pray for renewed strength for the Indian church, that they will continue to hold fast to the Lord and proclaim His name throughout India.

3 PRAY FOR PEACE

On 6 December, the Supreme Court in India will meet to investigate violence and hate speech targeting Christians in many parts of the country. Pray that justice will be done.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH?



READ

“I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”
ISAIAH 41:9-10



REFLECT

Maria says God never abandoned her in her trials – even though He didn’t remove her from them right away. Why do you think God doesn’t always immediately rescue us from difficult situations?

Has there been a challenging time in your life when you felt encouraged and sustained by God? How so?



RESPOND

“For the word of God is alive and active” (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is an incredible source of comfort in times of distress. Maria anchored herself in God’s Word, so she could draw on Scripture during difficult times. Is there a verse, a psalm or a promise of God you can commit to learning to strengthen you?



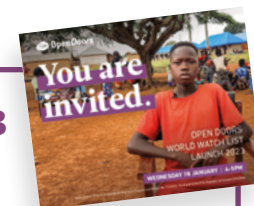
Invite your MP to the 2023 World Watch List launch


You can ensure the voices of our persecuted family, like Maria’s, will be heard in the corridors of power by inviting your MP to the World Watch List parliamentary launch on Wednesday 18 January 2023. Over 90 MPs attended the 2022 launch thanks to you. Fiona Bruce, the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, renewed her commitment to raising the plight of persecuted Christians in Parliament: “We need to make sure that everyone,

everywhere can follow their chosen religion or belief.”

This year, MPs will again hear first-hand from persecuted Christians. This is a precious opportunity for those in power to discover how they can use their influence to protect and uphold religious freedom around the world.

> To invite your MP, simply fill in and send the tear-off invite enclosed with this magazine. Thank you!





Valentina is
going home for
Christmas.
But it wouldn't be
safe to stay long.

**Will you show Valentina that she's
family, with a gift of hope?**

Children like Valentina (15) in Colombia are often targeted with violence and discrimination. To find safety and education, Valentina had to leave her family – because of the threats she faces for being a pastor's daughter.

A gift of £59 could mean a child of a persecuted church leader gets a month of shelter and protection at the Colombia Children's Centre.

Make a persecuted child part of your family this Christmas, with your gift today. Return the enclosed envelope, phone **01993 460015** or visit **opendoorsuk.org**

CHRISTMAS APPEAL

 **OpenDoors**