

Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | July/August 2023



A forgotten generation?

You can show Christians in the Middle East and North Africa that they're not abandoned



OpenDoors

Prayer Webinar

14 SEPTEMBER | 8PM | ONLINE

What's it like to be spied on? How do you keep faithfully following Jesus when your every move is being watched? In the September prayer webinar, you can hear how increased surveillance is affecting our brothers and sisters in countries like China – and how they continue to risk everything for Christ. Why not invite your small group to join this time of prayer?


Find out more and register at opendoorsuk.org

TACKLE PERSECUTION

AT THE 2023 WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Did you know that five countries from the World Watch List are participating in this year's Women's World Cup? It all kicks off on 20 July.

These are Nigeria, China, Colombia, Vietnam and Morocco, and we've created an all-age wall chart that invites you, your family or your prayer group to fill in the scores and track the tournament, whilst engaging with stories, facts and prayer requests from these countries.



Pray whilst they play and help tackle persecution worldwide. Order today at opendoorsuk.org/worldcup2023



JOIN US FOR IDOP ONLINE 2023

Uniting in prayer for the persecuted church

Sunday 5 November, 7.30-8.30pm

You are invited to join an evening of prayer to mark the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. We'll be joining with friends from the Evangelical Alliance, Release International and CSW to share stories from Nigeria, Nicaragua and imprisoned believers – and you'll have the opportunity to pray together for Christians who courageously risk everything to follow Jesus. You can register at opendoorsuk.org/idop

Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide.

Open Doors supplies Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also mobilise the church in the UK and Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

If you have any questions about the work of Open Doors, or would like to reprint any of the articles in this magazine, please do get in touch.

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COVER: These young Christians in Iraq use music to share hope and peace (see Prayer Diary p8).

Letter from Henrietta

Hope and security

“May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels” PSALM 122:7

Imagine somebody you know who's in their 20s. What are the things they hope for in their future? When I think of the young people I know, the answers would differ for each of them. Some have particular careers they hope to follow, places they want to live, communities they want to be part of. What all of them want – and many can take for granted – is freedom, safety and security.

Young Christians in North Africa and the Middle East long for exactly the same things. But, for them, freedom, safety and security are often unattainable. They don't have opportunities, the economic situation is desperate, and they face persecution and opposition every day because of their faith. Sometimes that is a violent attack – more often, as with Baher* in Egypt (p6), it's the daily grind of discrimination.

When local Open Doors partners speak to young people in North Africa and the Middle East, they often say two things. Firstly, that they want to leave the region. They see other countries as offering the hope that is missing at home. And, secondly, that they feel forgotten by the worldwide church.

I'm saddened, but I'm not surprised. Today, we have the opportunity to show our young brothers and sisters that we haven't forgotten them. We can help give them reasons to stay in the countries they love, and hope for the future. These courageous young Christians need that. And the church in North Africa and the Middle East needs it – without young people, the future of the church in this region is under threat.

I was recently in Lebanon, and even the Lebanese prime minister, a Sunni Muslim, said he recognised 'the desperate need to help Christians stay in the Middle East'. How much more do we know how crucial this is! Together, we can help the church raise up leaders passionate for God, eagerly pursuing justice and filled with hope that lasts.

Every blessing,



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

*Name changed for security reasons

World Watch News

INDIA Please continue to pray following outbreak of violence

Christians in Manipur, India, continue to request prayer following devastating ethno-religious violence that's claimed the lives of around 80 believers and destroyed some 400 churches. More than 10,000 believers have also fled their homes, many of which have been burnt down.

"We believe that the prayers from Christians all over the world have kept the tribal believers safe until now," says Lhing Haokip*, a local believer. "Pray with us that God will strengthen Christians to be on their knees to pray and seek God."

The violence broke out in May following a protest by the largely Christian minority tribes in the region. Their grievances centre around eviction from forest land where they've resided for hundreds of years, as well as fears over plans to give the Meitei majority 'scheduled tribe' status which would make it harder for the minority tribes to get jobs and other benefits. A local Open Doors partner confirms that violence is continuing weeks later.

While Christians are not the only people affected, local sources say that they have faced ten times the persecution received by Hindus, with extremists using the conflict as an excuse to hunt out church leaders and try to force entire Christian communities to convert to Hinduism. Believers from tribes on both sides of the conflict have been targeted.

Thank you to all of you who've generously given to Open

Doors' emergency appeal for those affected by the crisis. As Lhing Haokip says, your prayers are also being felt by believers in Manipur.

"We believe that God is with us in this battle," says Lhing Haokip. "Though the churches don't function as normal, the church is open for the believers to come and pray, and many believers are praying."

The crisis has been met with a muted response from the authorities, leading to concerns that the violence will continue to spread. It's also resulted in skyrocketing inflation, whilst educational institutions have closed and there's a shortage of fuel, gas and cash. Your support for the appeal will help meet the urgent needs felt by many believers.

"Please, please keep praying for the Christians," says Vishnu*,

BELOW Christians on both sides of an ethno-religious clash have been targeted with violence



a local partner. "They have had to abandon their houses and run to safe places... There are children, women, old people – their lives are uncertain, and they're deprived of basic facilities and amenities and deeply traumatised."

If you'd like to give, please visit opendoorsuk.org/manipur

*Names changed for security reasons

BANGLADESH 49 baptised in new pool!

There is joy in Bangladesh following the installation of a baptism pool that's already been used to baptise 49 new Christians!

The believers attend a church of around 500 across 23 house groups. Given that the locality is mostly Muslim, there are no

public places where they can conduct baptisms without risk of reprisal. Baptisms can be done secretly, but this often requires a pool which small churches cannot afford.

In answer to the church's prayers, Open Doors local partners helped build a small pool in the church premises.



"We are very thankful," says Pastor Habib. "Now we can baptise freely and without fear or panic. We can do the baptism ceremony with joy and peace, singing worship songs."

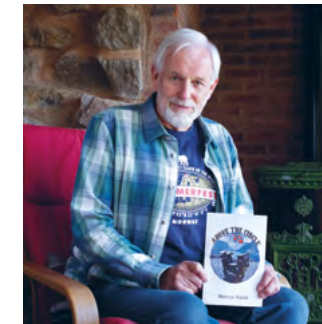
UK Mervyn pens his 6,000-mile adventure

An Open Doors supporter has written a book about his 6,000-mile round trip to the Arctic Circle on his motorbike – a journey that raised around £10,000 for our persecuted family!

Mervyn Smith from Highley, Shropshire, completed the challenge in July 2018, almost two years after having open-heart surgery. It took him 18 days to complete and involved riding through the hottest European summer on record.

"There were times when I felt physically shot, but there was no way I was going to give up because the purpose of the trip was the persecuted church," says Mervyn, who often talks about his journey during talks as an Open Doors volunteer speaker.

He adds that the book, titled *Above the Circle*, is a 'warts and



all' account of how the adventure came about, what happened on the ride and how he reached his fundraising target.

But above all, the book is about the persecuted church – which is why all proceeds will go to them. "The vision for the book is that it will raise as much for Open Doors as the challenge did," he says.

Above the Circle is available from Amazon.

NIGERIA

Blessing rediscovers her joy



Your support has 'brought joy' to the heart of a widow from Nigeria whose husband was killed by Fulani militants earlier this year.

"Since my husband's death, my life has been emptied of joy and peace," says Blessing, whose in-laws have refused to help her and her three children. But after attending the trauma care centre run by Open Doors partners, Blessing is finding healing and rediscovering joy.

"I had not been able to get anyone to share the burden in my heart with, and I have been living with deep heart wounds," she says. "However, when I came here, I found people who were willing to listen and pray with me. I am very happy. Even though I still feel the pain, I feel more relieved now."

"This programme has brought joy to my heart. I have experienced a lot of hardship and pain in this life, but I have learned that God knows about my pain, and I am not alone."

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

BAHER THOUGHT HE'D LOST EVERYTHING. HERE'S HOW HE FOUND HOPE AGAIN.

PICTURED Most Christians in Baher's community in Egypt have to work at the local stone quarry

If you'd gone to visit Baher* in his village in Egypt a few years ago, you'd have been greeted with a sad sight. Baher was about 20 and trying to run a small business to support his family, since his parents were too ill to work. "I began to transport gravel, sand and other light building supplies," he says. "Yet no one wanted to hire me, and I was rejected." Baher felt shunned, overlooked and despised.

There are two reasons for that rejection. The first? Because he is a Christian.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

"Christians in my village have suffered from persecution for years and years," he says. "Christians here suffer humiliation and oppression." It was clear that people in Baher's community didn't want to hire him because he has chosen to follow Jesus.

The persecution that believers face in his village is sometimes quite subtle, like this refusal to use Christian-owned small businesses. At other times it is much more overt. The homes of Christians have been looted and burned down. A local church leader received death threats when he decided to renovate the church building. The victims of persecution have no legal rights, and they live in a climate of fear. Across Egypt and Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East and North Africa, this is a common story. Christians can be victims of violent attacks – but they can also be ground down by everyday discrimination.

But that wasn't the only reason that Baher's business was scorned: the other was his disability. And even this links back to his faith.

*Names changed for security reasons

DAINGEROUS QUARRY

Baher was only 13 when he started working in the local quarry. Almost all the young Christian men in the village end up working there – since, because of their faith, they aren't offered any better, safer work.

"We are obliged to work at the quarry since there are no other job alternatives," says Baher. "Working in the quarries is scary and horrible. I was afraid just at the thought of joining my brother's work, but the choice was not mine."

Baher had good reason to be anxious. He hadn't been working at the quarry for very long when a tragic incident happened.

TWO TRAGEDIES

"We work with old and badly maintained machinery, without safety precautions," says Baher. "It is common for a worker in the quarry to lose a limb." One day, Baher's arm was severed by the quarry's cutting

machine. He passed out from the pain, and woke up later in hospital with the prospect of a very different future.

The family faced even worse a few years later. Baher's brother was killed at work in the quarry.

CHRISTIANS IN MY VILLAGE HAVE SUFFERED FROM PERSECUTION FOR YEARS AND YEARS

"My brother had an electric shock," remembers Baher. "His employer did not want to let him leave the job. But my brother was not able to stand the pain, and his heartbeat accelerated; he could not take a breath. His lungs were filled with the fine dust.

"We tried to save him and rushed him to the closest medical

centre. However, the closest hospital was not equipped to deal with emergencies. The doctor brought the stethoscope to examine him but realised that my brother had died. We were unable to determine the exact cause of his death. My heart was torn apart, and I lost all hope in life."

FEELING HOPELESS

So many things in Baher's life came together to make him feel hopeless. The loss of his brother. His disability. The pressure of being sole breadwinner to support his parents, his sisters (who aren't allowed to work in their strict Islamic culture), and now his brother's wife and children too. The way that he saw Christians being treated all around him. And his story is one that is repeated by many young Christians throughout the Middle East and North Africa (see box p.11).

"Most young people here don't have a bright future and they know that," says Thomas*,



ABOVE Baher lost an arm in an accident at the quarry

Open Doors director for the region. "Most of those who remained have no option. They stay because Europe closed the borders, because they have no money to travel, or they have responsibilities to their parents. We need to invest in those who stay. They need to grow in their faith, to survive hopelessness. The youth is the church of today and the future. If the youth leaves, the church will, humanly speaking, diminish to almost zero."

Baher didn't just feel hopeless in the wake of all these sad events. He felt angry – with God: "I hated myself and I hated God because I thought He was the reason of all that happened to me," he says. "I blamed God. 'Why did you do that to me? I did not do anything wrong! I just wanted to help my family!'"

MEETING AN OPEN DOORS PARTNER

Baher was despairing when Fady* visited him. Fady – a local Open Doors partner – remembers that day well.

"Baher looked miserable and anxious," Fady says. "His heart was full of resentment and bitterness towards God. When I entered the room, Baher didn't

want to talk with me at first, and it was really challenging to start building a conversation with him.

THE YOUTH IS THE CHURCH OF TODAY AND THE FUTURE

"Suddenly, Baher exploded with anger, bombarding us with questions: 'Does God exist?'"

BELOW A microloan from Open Doors local partners means Baher now has a thriving sheep business



Where is God in my life? If God is in control, as you say, and works everything for the good, why has He forsaken me?"

"That's really horrible," Fady replied. "I understand your feelings, but please, don't lose hope. God is not far away from our troubles. Believe me, God never leaves us because He is our Heavenly Father and the Father never forsakes His children."

Fady also shared the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, praying that God would use the verse to speak to Baher's troubled heart: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12).

MICROLOAN PROJECT

This visit was just the first step in the relationship that Fady and his team have with Baher. They are keen to show Baher that he is part of a wider community

BELOW Conditions in the quarries are often physically gruelling and dangerous





ABOVE Baher loves the discipleship group he's joined: "I feel serene when I engage with God's Word because Jesus is everything to me."

of Christians who will stand with and support vulnerable believers like him.

"We are showing our heavenly Father's love to him and his family in a practical way," shares Fady. "First, we helped him to set up a microproject to start sheep breeding, so that he can have a regular source of income for his family."

Having researched the area, they knew this small business would have a better chance of success – and a microloan from Open Doors partners made it a possibility. Last year, these partners provided 969 microloans in Egypt, each one often supporting entire families of Christians.

"I am blessed with the microproject the ministry provided me," says Baher. "It is now working very well, and I can provide for my parents and for my brother's wife and children. If you had not helped me with it, I would not have had any income."

Alongside this, Fady helped Baher enrol in a local discipleship group where he is deepening his faith and learning more about God, particularly His

presence amidst troubles. Last year, almost 270,000 Christians in Egypt were able to enrol on discipleship programmes run by Open Doors partners, thanks to the gifts and prayers of Open Doors supporters.

"My whole family shifted our focus from blaming God to praising Him and now we go to church on a regular basis," says Baher. "I have seen God's practical love through your love, care and presence."

"HE IS NOT FAR AWAY"

Most of all, Baher knows that God has not abandoned him: "I believe in God's sovereignty, and that He is not far away in the sky, but He is very near to me. When I was searching for my own solutions, God was preparing and making a way to reach out to me through your ministry team."

I HAVE SEEN GOD'S PRACTICAL LOVE THROUGH YOUR LOVE, CARE AND PRESENCE

Baher can't read, but now he has access to God's word through an audio Bible. "It allows me to listen to the word of God daily and experience an intimate relationship with Him," says Baher. "I feel serene when I engage with God's word because Jesus is everything to me."

It's clear that Baher's life is being transformed. He is able to raise money for his family through a much safer job, he knows he is not alone, and he knows God's closeness. "If you had not backed me, I would not have changed," he says. "You

lifted my morale and helped me to restore my relationship with God."

Ongoing support is vital for helping Baher feel connected with his wider Christian family, and there are many, many other young believers in the Middle East and North Africa, like Baher, who feel ignored and rejected and need support.

Without your prayers and support, many could be left feeling hopeless and alone. You can help them have a completely different story. Today, you can make hope last.

PLEASE PRAY

- For all young Christians in the Middle East and North Africa who feel abandoned and hopeless to receive God's hope
- For protection and opportunities for Egypt's marginalised Christian communities
- That Fady and other Open Doors local partners will receive God's wisdom and provision.

PLEASE GIVE

- **Every £18** could help a persecuted Christian family establish their livelihood, giving them long-term financial security
- **Every £33** could help strengthen and encourage a vulnerable quarry worker through vital training
- **Every £52** could provide much-needed medical care to four quarry workers for a month.

You can make a gift at opendoorsuk.org



"WE FEEL FORGOTTEN, WE FEEL ALONE": YOUNG CHRISTIANS SPEAK OUT

Across North Africa and the Middle East, church leaders are seeing young Christians feeling hopeless. Many want to leave the region, because of economic decline and limited job opportunities, on top of discrimination and persecution.

"My big dream is that the youth will stay," says Bishop Daniel in Iraq. "If we don't help them today, we will not have any future for the church. That's why we are trying very, very hard to give them better opportunities here."

In September 2022, Open Doors gathered young believers from six countries across the region. In their own words, they put together an appeal to their worldwide family: "Faith helps us endure and find hope. But the present circumstances and ongoing crises weaken our endurance. Help us fight the crises!

"We, as young citizens, strongly believe that the

presence of Christians in the Middle East keeps the region from reaching the bottom of the abyss. We are the blood that the Middle East is bleeding right now. If nothing is done, it leads to its death.

"FAITH HELPS US ENDURE AND FIND HOPE"

"We feel forgotten by the world at large, while being isolated and alone in a hostile environment. Help us break through this harsh reality. Give us the right means to hold on and live through the crisis, despair and hopelessness around us. Do 'make hope last'!

Thomas*, the regional director, was shocked by what he heard. "It motivated us to work harder to make hope last for the young generation. The forum was just a start."

*Names changed for security reasons

Healing and hope:

How Jubran is reviving futures in Iraq



Jubran (28) was one of 120,000 Christians who fled their homes in the Nineveh Plain when so-called Islamic State (IS) invaded in 2014. As a young man who's lived through war, persecution and displacement, he knows just how much Iraqi Christians have been traumatised by the events of the last decade. Young Iraqi Christians, particularly, feel hopeless about their future. And, thanks to your prayers

and support, he is now an Open Doors partner offering help and healing to around 500 people at a Centre of Hope.

Jubran manages the Pool of Siloam Ecumenical Centre, a Centre of Hope just south of Erbil, which helps people connect with their community and heal from their trauma. "We offer many activities, but our main goal is to bring the healing

message from the Bible," Jubran says. "In all our activities we open the Bible. It says so much about trauma and how to help people with it. From the Bible we can learn how to deal with our pain, how to live in peace."

USING THE BIBLE TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

The activities range from football to a devotional time, from one-to-one conversations

You may remember Father Daniel – now a bishop – from previous magazines and Standing Strong events. As a young man himself, a large part of his ministry is focused on helping young Iraqi Christians to stay in the country. "I think youth is our today and our future," he says. "If we don't help them today, we will not have any future for the church."

"Most of our activities in Iraq focus on bringing the hope of Christ to the lives of our young people. We also offer vocational training for young people to increase the possibility of finding job opportunities in Iraq. In addition to that, we're doing leadership training, we are empowering our young leaders."

"The existence of the church in Iraq depends on our brothers and sisters in the western world. We believe that the church is one body, we are in this together. I thank you for the help you are giving to the Centres of Hope here in Iraq. My big dream is that the youth will stay, and that they become the salt and light of this country."



to creative group activities. At the centre, people in the discipleship activities are also encouraged to read Christian books that speak about healing.

"We hear many stories: children that lost both parents, parents who lost sons or daughters, people who lost brothers or sisters because of bombing or accidents," Jubran says. "But also, all those who were displaced for a long time. Some struggled with questions like 'Where is God?' and 'If He exists, why doesn't He intervene?' Some even stopped believing. By using the Bible, we can help them to find answers, to discover why things are happening in our lives."

"BECAUSE YOU HELP US, WE CAN GIVE HELP!"

Jubran felt called to this very specific ministry by God: "There was a vision, a message from God, a calling. One day I opened my eyes and saw myself involved in this work." After beginning a ministry on Facebook, he later worked with Father Daniel – now Bishop Chimon Daniel – to set up a Centre of Hope that

focused on trauma care. All the workers in the centre are trained before they start working there – and there is an emphasis on empathetic care. "When we say that people should express their feelings, we have to do that in the first place ourselves," Jubran explains. "We cry with them. We cannot teach something that we do not do ourselves."

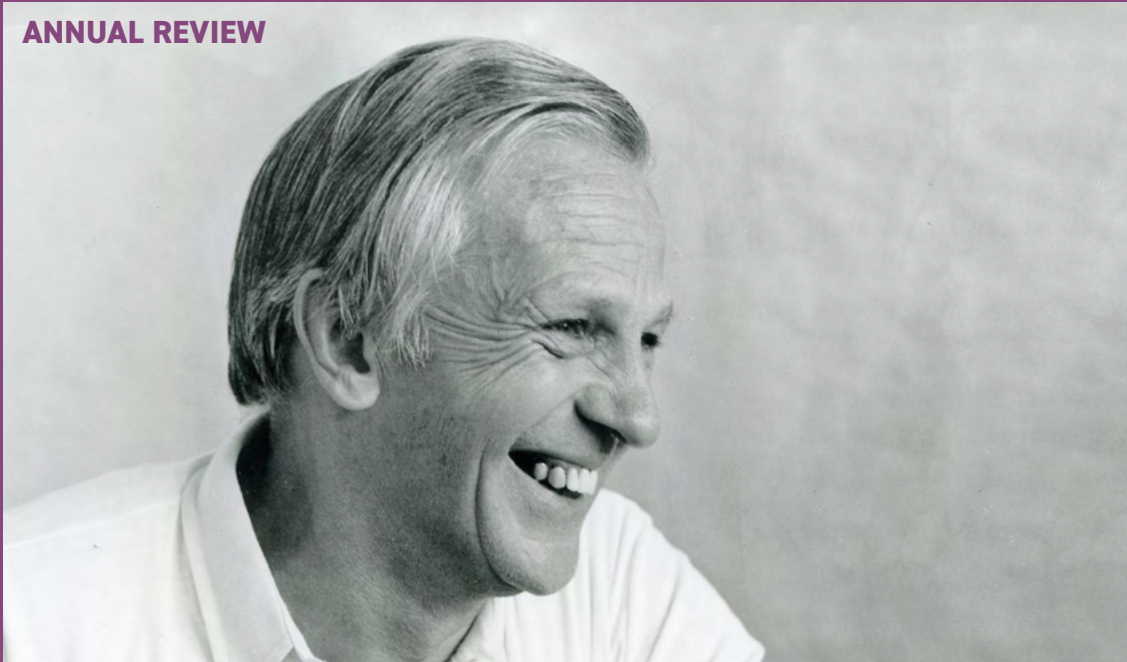
The centre currently runs activities three to five days a week, and Jubran hopes that the work will expand. "That is why Jesus called us. He believed that we would be able to give hope, He gave us a message to the people. I hope the work will multiply, that there will be more people at more places offering this help. There are millions who need hope, healing." This is the kind of work that enables Iraqi Christians, particularly young Christians, see that there is hope for their future in the country.

"There are no words that are enough to say how thankful I am to the donors of this centre," he adds. "Because you help us, we can give help, give healing through the Bible. Thank you!"



YOU CAN HELP MAKE HOPE LAST FOR YOUNG IRAQI BELIEVERS

When asked what Christians around the world should pray for him, Jubran says, "That God will give me and others the power to help. That He will give us patience and love, so that we can give love to the people." Your prayers and gifts will help more young people like Jubran and Bishop Chimon Daniel reach young believers who are living traumatised and without hope. Give a gift today at opendoorsuk.org



Thank you for loving the persecuted church

For all of us at Open Doors, 2022 will always be remembered as the year when our founder, Brother Andrew, went to be in glory. He lived long enough to see his Bible smuggling trip to Communist Eastern Europe in 1955 transform into a ministry serving the persecuted church in more than 70 countries. His life of courageous obedience to God and compassionate service to the persecuted church profoundly impacts many people around the world, and I was touched to see so many of you share your memories of Brother Andrew and reading *God's Smuggler*. Thank you.

And thank you so very much for your continuing prayers and support for persecuted believers. In a year when many

faced economic challenges in the UK and Ireland, it has been humbling and inspiring to see Open Doors supporters faithfully and generously donating to the persecuted church – and, of course, speaking out and praying. More than ever, I'm convinced that prayer is the most vital thing for making a real change in the lives of our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Those prayers were particularly needed for Afghanistan, and in 2022 we joined in a global year of prayer for the country and our persecuted family there. It was also the final year of the seven-year *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, which has helped so many families in Syria, Iraq and the wider region

– and has led to our *Make Hope Last* campaign. Thank you for persevering in your support as our church family perseveres in the face of significant challenges. Together we are giving them precious hope.

As you read this annual review, please know that each of your prayers, gifts and actions is enabling the risk-takers of the persecuted church to stand strong and keep shining the light of Christ.

Thank you so much.



Henrietta Blyth,
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

£15.8 million

was donated in support of persecuted Christians

Over 98,950

people prayed regularly for the persecuted church

93 MPs

attended the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List

Over 7 million

persecuted believers received practical and spiritual support

FOR EVERY £1 YOU GAVE...

90p went to supporting persecuted Christians

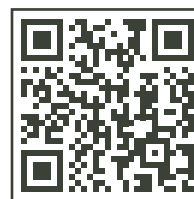
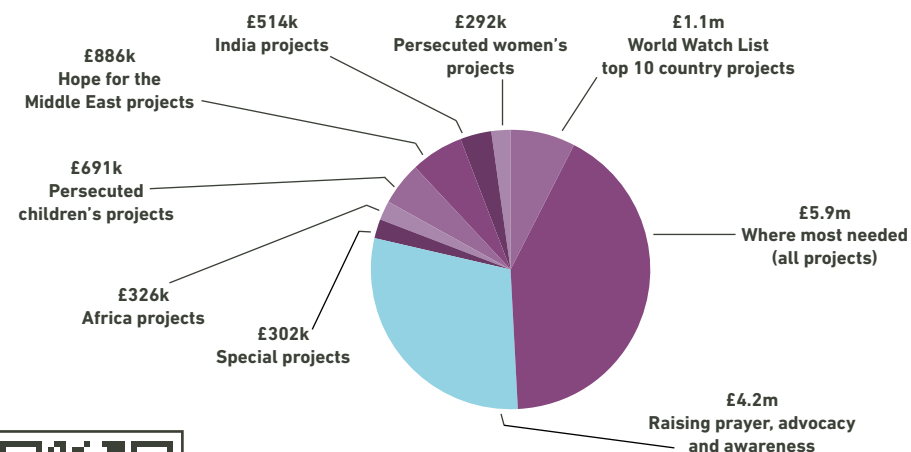
63p funded vital projects to strengthen persecuted Christians worldwide



27p raised prayer, advocacy and awareness in the UK and Ireland for persecuted Christians

10p went to our operational and running costs

HOW WE USED YOUR DONATIONS TO SUPPORT PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS



Visit opendoorsuk.org/annualreview or scan the QR code for more information

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.

Persecution is growing but lives are changing – helped by you

The persecution of Christians worldwide is an achingly familiar story. Yet remarkable testimonies of welcome and unexpected change continue to emerge. These simply wouldn't be possible without your unstinting prayers and support.

LIVING OR DYING FOR JESUS

114,000

North Korean believers received vital support – including food, shelter and training – through secret networks in China.

RIGHT Image is from a reconstruction of a secret safehouse in China

"I was so afraid I could barely stand on my legs," shares a North Korean refugee, recalling the moment when she was invited to a Bible study run by an Open Doors safehouse in China. "In North Korea, no religion is allowed and just knowing about it can get you punished. I knew there were a lot of secret agents in China – I wondered if this guy was one of them."

But she bravely went – and she encountered Jesus! "I am so changed here in the safe house," she continues. "I get up at 4.30am and pray for one and a half hours. Then I read the Bible from six to seven. With God's help, I've read the Bible 17 times already."

"Living or dying, I'm devoted to the evangelisation of

North Korea," adds the secret believer. "I cannot see my people suffer. If I must be a martyr to save them, I will be one."

It's a remarkable testimony that shows how, helped by your faithful prayers and support, the gospel continues to change lives in countries where Christians face extreme persecution. This is not only in North Korea, but in places like Afghanistan, which last year was number one on the World Watch List for the first time ever.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE WORLD CUP



With seven countries from the World Watch List playing in last year's men's World Cup, the tournament offered a precious opportunity to pray for our persecuted family. It's one you seized, ordering around **5,000 World Cup wallcharts and other resources to help you pray** for the persecuted church. "You've helped open the eyes of this little five-year-old (PICTURED)," said Aaron, father of Judah. "There has been genuine heartache for those who can't read their Bibles like he can, but also such earnest prayer."



A DREAM COME TRUE

1,500,000

persecuted women and girls received vital support.

Transformation lies at the heart of the ongoing *See. Change.* campaign, with its vision that every woman who is persecuted for her faith and gender is seen, valued and empowered to reach her God-given potential.

Among the thousands of women and girls you've helped recently is Samia from Indonesia (ABOVE). She had a dream to earn money to provide for her family, including her husband, who struggles to work due to ill health. Open Doors local partners gave Samia two small goats – and what a difference it's made!

Through goat rearing, the family are even able to save money and help others – which they continue to do, despite hostility from some Muslim neighbours who don't like to see the family flourishing. It's a far cry from the days when they had to depend on high-interest loans to survive.

"I dreamt a small dream and God fulfilled it, I am very happy," says Samia. "We did not have any way to afford one goat on our own, but you have given us two goats, and that changed our financial situation. We are thankful to you for your kind heart for us."



"THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR ME"

508,000

Christians in sub-Saharan Africa reached with help, including emergency aid and livelihood support.

Your kindness also made a big difference in Nigeria, and across sub-Saharan Africa, where Christians are experiencing heightening violence at the hands of Islamic extremists.

This includes Charity, whom many of you wrote letters to last year. She and her family spent time at the trauma centre run by Open Doors local partners after being caught up in an attack by Boko Haram militants which killed members of their family.

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, thank you for your praying for me and supporting the ministry," she said after hearing that people worldwide were impacted by her story. "You have helped me and so many other believers in Nigeria through your support."

"Please continue to pray for me and my children, that God will protect us and that they

will continue their education and grow strong in the Word of God. Pray also for our country and that peace will return. Pray for these people who attack, steal, abduct and kill, that they will turn to God and stop these evil deeds. Please do not forget us and continue to pray for us."

> Watch a video of Charity at youtube.com/opendoorsuk

SPOTLIGHT ON THE WORLD WATCH LIST PARLIAMENTARY LAUNCH

Thousands of you invited your MP to the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List 2022 report. In response, **93 MPs tuned in** to hear findings from the latest research and stories from our persecuted family. "Very concerned at the first-hand reports of persecution of Christians in Afghanistan, India, China and West Africa at today's Open Doors World Watch List 2022 launch," tweeted Chi Onwurah MP. "We must work for freedom of worship around the world."



SPOTLIGHT ON STANDING STRONG

For the first time in three years, **Standing Strong Live was in person, with hundreds of you gathering at Trent Vineyard in Nottingham** to hear first-hand stories from Christians in Asia and the Middle East. The event was also streamed online; a further 600 or so tuned in live, and since then the event (available at youtube.com/opendoorsuk) has been watched around 2,500 times! "Hearing from 'real', in-the-flesh Christians from the persecuted church was humbling and challenging," said a supporter. "Taking Communion with the speakers was a powerfully memorable experience."



MAKING HOPE LAST IN SYRIA

3,900,000

believers in the Middle East and North Africa given help, including the rebuilding of homes and livelihood support.

"It's a prolonged crisis, without seeing an end," said Pastor Edward last year of the challenges facing Christians in the Middle East. "On the other hand,

we experienced divine light amid darkness."

This light often shines because of your generosity – including through a counselling programme, the first of its kind in Syria. The two-year course seeks to train people to be counsellors in their churches and society. The first 33 students graduated this year.

It's helping address a huge need. "The situation of the people is so sad," explains Ruba, a participant (RIGHT). "They have no hope, no hope. They are scared, sad. You hear people say I want to leave or die."

Ruba serves at a Centre of Hope, where she's already using what's she learnt to help give people hope that will last. "In the beginning of the war, I could leave the country," she says. "But I refused. I love Syria. I wanted to raise my children here and wanted, as a Christian, to be a blessing for our country. We are seeing God doing miraculous things; people are being saved!"



VALENTINA'S DRIVEN FAITH

352,000

children of the persecuted church reached with support.

For Valentina from Colombia, who featured in last year's children's appeal, the seven-hour drive was worth it. Much of her time is spent at the children's centre, where she can be safe from persecution, but each year she returns home for Christmas. Last year came with an added treat – her first visit in five years to see her grandparents!

The long drive was one of several trips she made with her family over Christmas. "These moments were filled with laughter, food and joy," shares a local partner. "Valentina's longing to spend time with her family was fulfilled and many more dreams continue to grow in her heart."

This includes a desire to encourage others who, like her, face hostility for their faith in Jesus – a calling strengthened by the letters she exchanged with Mimi from Iraq, whom you might also remember from last year's campaign. "I felt moved, blessed, impacted," she says. "I want to meet her one day."

Valentina's growing faith, and her relationship with Mimi, is but a glimpse into the many beautiful changes to emerge from your incredible support for children of the persecuted church worldwide.

> Watch videos of Valentina and Mimi at youtube.com/opendoorsuk



LEFT Many of you wrote letters to young people at the children's centre, including Valentina



SPOTLIGHT ON FUNDRAISING

At least **£58,700 was raised last year by supporters** through various fundraising activities. This includes Tim Parr (ABOVE), who's clocking up 1,000km through running, cycling and swimming, and he's already raised 10% of his £10,000 target! "I began running a year ago but didn't just want it to benefit my own health, so I focused on Open Doors given its great work with the persecuted church," he says. "I'm yet to finish my target distance having been delayed by illness, injury and the winter. However, with God's help I'll complete it."

SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH

In 2022, our amazing **Open Doors Youth team spoke at 61 events**, plus four festivals including Spring Harvest. They also handed out 1,250 packs of *Brave Faith*, a six-week resource that invites young people to deepen their relationship with God and the persecuted church. It's crucial that younger generations hear about, and learn from, our persecuted family – and your support enables us to do just that. Get your copy of *Brave Faith* at opendoorsyouth.org/bravefaith



Thank you

Thank you for remembering your persecuted family.

There are many ways you can stay connected, including regular emails which you can sign up for at opendoorsuk.org/subscribe



MEET THE RISK-TAKERS OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Do you want to hear first-hand stories from believers risking it all for Christ? Are you looking to introduce your friends, family or church to the courageous faith of persecuted Christians?

Then come along to Standing Strong! Events are taking place throughout September, October and November, where you'll hear from persecuted Christians about how your prayers and gifts are strengthening the church around the world. There will also be a chance to ask questions and pray with our speakers.

Kim Sang-Hwa* will be speaking at the events in November. She's the daughter of a North Korean church leader, and she and her husband now live in South Korea. But Sang-Hwa's journey

to faith began with a terrifying discovery...

"I come from a Christian family, although for a long time I wasn't even aware my parents were believers," she says. "In our house was a hidden closet. When I was 12, I accidentally found it. I started to feel inside the cabinet with my hand and I felt a book. I opened it and began to read: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...'

"I began to shiver and dropped the book. I was so scared. My discovery could cost me my life.

"I weighed up my options. Should I tell my teacher? Should I visit the local security official? I knew it was my duty to report this illegal book. But it was my family

which was involved. And I also had all these questions: Who is this God? Or 'what'?"

You can hear more of Kim Sang-Hwa's amazing story, as well as pray with her and for the church in North Korea, in November. You can keep up to date with speakers for other events on our website. Find a Standing Strong gathering coming to a region near you, below.

BOOK NOW!

STANDING STRONG
COMING TO A REGION NEAR YOU!

ALL EVENTS 10AM - 2.30PM

SPEAKER TBC

30 SEPTEMBER - The C3 Church, Cambridge

07 OCTOBER - Bangor Elim Church, Northern Ireland

WITH KIM SANG HWA* FROM NORTH KOREA

04 NOVEMBER - Bridge Community Church, Leeds

11 NOVEMBER - Connect Church, Birmingham

*Name changed for security reasons



Why Anna is leaving a legacy for the persecuted church

You probably have people in your life who have inspired you and your faith. Perhaps someone who first told you about Jesus, or who taught you something valuable that you've carried through life – either with their words or by their example. For Anna*, an Open Doors supporter for many years, there were three people who deepened her understanding of generosity and giving.

"My early inspiration came from three people: my father, my godfather and my aunt," she says. "My upbringing made me aware of the principle of giving. Then, when I became a Christian in my teens, we were taught that you only start to give when you have got rid of your tithe – tithing first, and then being as generous as you can be afterwards."

As a new Christian, Anna would tithe money from her student grant and wages from her work at the local swimming baths – encouraged also by the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." At various times in the past, this included giving free lodgings in the family home to people at difficult times in their life.

As Anna grew older, giving sometimes came with sacrifice. "During my life, there have been times when I have found it hard to make ends meet," she remembers. These difficult times in her life, and stories of her father on the run from Nazi persecution, helped deepen a long-held compassion for people who are suffering. It was around this time that she first became aware of the suffering of the persecuted church.

"I want to ensure that those in the wider church community – particularly the persecuted Christians – can be supported"

"I'd always heard stories of persecution," she says. "My own father was a refugee, a member of the persecuted Confessing Church, who lost his parents at Auschwitz. I knew about losing everything, including loved ones, and being on the run, and being a stranger. But I didn't know the extent of what people are suffering just for being Christians today."

This connection to the suffering of fellow believers across the

world gradually took root in her. Over time, Anna learned more and more about the persecuted church from the Open Doors website and publications, starting to see the enormity of the situation more and more, and to notice where the plight of refugees was in the news.

After praying and listening to God, Anna decided to leave a legacy to the work of Open Doors in her will. "I want to ensure that those in the wider church community – particularly the persecuted Christians – can be supported," she says. Thanks to her decision, she can ensure that she is standing alongside her persecuted church family for many years to come.

For Anna, leaving a gift in her will is a way to pass on the legacy of the people – like her father, godfather and aunt – who helped inspire and guide her own walk with Christ. Today, that's a decision you can make too.

You can get more information – including how to make your will for free – at opendoorsuk.org/legacy, or by contacting legacy@opendoorsuk.org or 01993 460015.

*Anna is a pseudonym, as this Open Doors supporter preferred to remain anonymous



RISK-TAKERS OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH



Rabin from Nepal

Rabin was exhausted. The journey to the village had been bad enough: six hours carrying heavy baggage, climbing steep hills to a place inaccessible by road or air. He had persevered, though, eventually reaching the small, remote church where he delivered persecution survival training to the grateful believers.

"The programme went well and everyone appreciated it," he recalls. "One participant shared that, after attending the seminar, she learnt to forgive and pray for her persecutors. Hearing such testimonies encouraged me."

But an hour into the return journey, the encouragement drained away.

"My legs started shaking," he remembers. "I was completely weary and couldn't walk any further. I missed my home, my family, and my comfortable bed. I was so tired that I could see a leech attached to my leg sucking

blood, but I didn't have enough energy to knock it away. It was a moment when I nearly gave up."

It was then that Rabin felt the Lord speak to him.

"God reminded me, 'Son, your labour will not go in vain. For every painful step you are taking, there will be a blessing after it.' I was reminded of 1 Corinthians 15:58 – 'Your labour in God is not in vain'. I felt God's presence encourage me to move ahead despite difficulties."

HARD TERRAIN

Rabin Karki has been serving persecuted Christians in Nepal as an Open Doors partner for the past five years.

"I focus on the remote areas where people require biblical training that empowers their spiritual life," he says. "This is my way of showing God's love to people."

But it is literally and metaphorically an uphill struggle. Although Nepal was declared a secular state in 2015, in 2018 the

government brought in an anti-conversion law. Anyone found proselytising faces a potential five-year prison sentence and a huge fine. Christians who had previously been able to share the gospel now need to be cautious, even inside church buildings.

"Son, your labour will not go in vain. For every painful step you are taking, there will be a blessing after it."

Christians also face opposition, bullying and discrimination from family members and local communities. They can be expelled from their homes or communities and some have been violently assaulted.

"In Nepal, Christianity is regarded as a foreign religion," says Rabin. "It is also known to be the low-caste religion. Christians are discriminated against and often socially boycotted."

Socially, culturally and politically, Nepal is a harsh terrain for believers to navigate. And then there are the physical challenges as well.

'AM I IN THE RIGHT PLACE?'

"Many times, I have had to walk on foot for several hours to reach a small church and to meet a group of persecuted Christians," Rabin explains. "There are times I think, 'Oh God, am I in the right place?'"

He is reassured by seeing the difference his work makes.

"I came in contact with a persecuted Christian woman who was struggling to fend for herself and her children. I learnt that her husband was working abroad, but was not sending her money because she had accepted the Christian faith." Through Open Doors partners, Puja was given some goats and now her growing flock provides for her family.

And, amazingly, despite the persecution, the number of Christians in Nepal is increasing, especially among those from the lower castes. "People from the low castes are treated as untouchables," explains Rabin. "When they come to Christianity, they experience equal treatment and love from the Christian community."

All of this gives Rabin the encouragement to keep on going.

"Many times, I am fearful of being interrogated by anti-Christians. I am worried about my family members that are dependent on me. But I keep everything in God's hands and continue to serve. God has protected me and my family until now and I thank the Lord."

HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR NEPAL WORLD WATCH LIST #55

PRAY FOR OPEN DOORS PARTNERS IN NEPAL

"I would like to thank all the brothers and sisters who are praying for us and supporting us," says Rabin. "Please pray for the Open Doors partners as we go to the field. Pray that God protects us and our families from all kinds of harm."

PRAY FOR CHRISTIANS IN NEPAL

Pray for persecuted Christians in Nepal, that they might have the courage to keep sharing the good news of Jesus despite the restrictions. Pray also for new converts – that they would be able to stand strong in the faith.

PRAY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Pray for those who have been elected in the recent national elections. Pray that God gives them wisdom and guidance so that they work for the welfare of all Nepalese, including Christians.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH?

READ

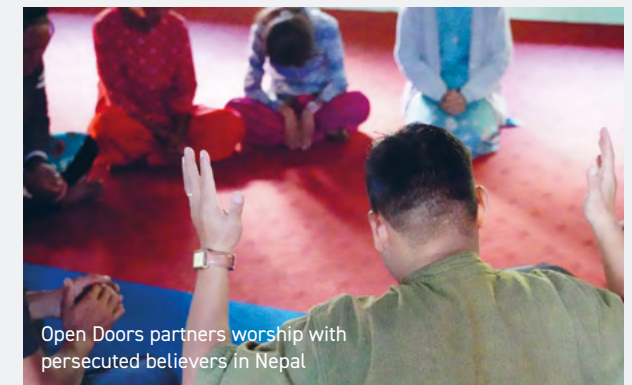
"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain."
– 1 Corinthians 15:58

REFLECT

Rabin says that many people are turning to Christ, despite the opposition. Many of these come from the 'untouchable' lower caste. What is it that attracts them to Jesus? Can you think of instances in the gospels where Jesus demonstrates the radical, taboo-busting love of God?

RESPOND

Perhaps you feel as though you are trudging wearily through difficult terrain. Perhaps you, like Rabin, say "Am I in the right place?" Ask God for reassurance and comfort. Remind yourself every day: our labour for the Lord is never in vain.



Open Doors partners worship with persecuted believers in Nepal



YOUNG CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT FEEL EVERYONE HAS TURNED THEIR BACK ON THEM.

YOU CAN BRING HOPE TO A FORGOTTEN GENERATION.

At just 13, Baher (name changed) was badly injured working in a stone quarry - one of the few jobs offered to Christians. His next business failed when people refused to hire a Christian.

A microloan from an Open Doors partner helped him have hope that lasts.

"I have seen God's practical love through your love, care and presence," he says.

A forgotten generation in the Middle East and North Africa urgently need that gift of hope today.

Every £18 could help a persecuted Christian family establish their livelihood, giving them long-term financial security

Make hope last by returning the enclosed envelope, phoning **01993 460015** or visiting **opendoorsuk.org**. Thank you.

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

 **OpenDoors**