

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | March/April 2020



**“Surely God is my
helper; the Lord
is the one who
sustains me.”**

PSALM 54:4

MARCH

| Nigeria

Sunday 1 March

The spread of extremist Islam is threatening the existence of the church in northern Nigeria – 2,983 Christians were killed in 2019. Pray for extraordinary grace to deal with the constant threat of violence, and strength to withstand pressure to deny Jesus.

Monday 2 March

Women who have been widowed or displaced by extremists are particularly vulnerable, and often face social exclusion that leads to poverty. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting widows with trauma care and economic empowerment programmes to help them provide for their families.

Tuesday 3 March

Mariyamu's husband was killed by Boko Haram militants, leaving her to provide for her children alone (see Magazine p8). "I have lost everything," she says, "including my husband who has been my helper." Pray that the microloan and trauma care she has received through Open Doors will restore her dignity and hope.

Wednesday 4 March

Give thanks that Rikiya, a widow whose home was destroyed when Boko Haram attacked her village, is now able to provide for her children thanks to microloans being provided by Open Doors'

supporters (see Magazine p8). "You are the ones who brought hope and healing back to me," she says. "If not for the loan I received, I don't know what I would have done."

Thursday 5 March

Keep praying for abducted schoolgirl Leah Sharibu, being held by Boko Haram because she refused to deny her faith in Jesus. There are unconfirmed rumours that she has been forcibly married to a Boko Haram commander and had a baby. Ask the Lord to protect her faith and secure her release.

Friday 6 March

Thousands of women remain in Boko Haram captivity. Pray for their liberation, and pray for those who have been freed or managed to escape to receive proper physical and emotional care.

Saturday 7 March

Revd Marcos (BELOW) pastors a Christian community that has suffered devastating attacks by Boko Haram which left many dead and several churches destroyed. Pray for Open Doors partners helping Revd Marcos to build a new church for his growing congregation, and supporting the community with trauma care and microloans.



| Persecuted Women

Sunday 8 March – International Women's Day

Open Doors research has revealed that many Christian women are persecuted for both their faith and gender. Yet their suffering often goes unseen. Pray that Open Doors' *See. Change.* campaign will draw attention to this issue and enable these women to be seen, valued and empowered.

Monday 9 March – Uganda

Aisha's husband divorced her when she became a Christian. Her stepson conspired with Muslim leaders to chase her from her home and business, and assaulted her children. Ask God to provide for Aisha and her children, and pray for healing from high blood pressure brought on by stress.

Tuesday 10 March - Ivory Coast

When Mariam (42) converted to Christ, her husband divorced her and her daughter (8) was forcibly removed by relatives. She was chased from her home, leaving her destitute. Pray for the local church supporting her and ask God to give her hope despite her circumstances.

Wednesday 11 March – East Africa

Amina* is a believer from a Muslim background who feels called to share the gospel with other women in her community and to disciple new believers. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and protect her, and equip her as

she cares for these women's practical and spiritual needs.

Thursday 12 March – India

Pray for Sunita*, a widow with four children who has been rejected by her family because of her faith in Jesus. Ask God to comfort and provide for Sunita and her family.

Friday 13 March – Nepal

Pray for Christian women in Nepal who face persecution from their family. Many are beaten, rejected and not allowed to go to church. Ask God to strengthen these women in their faith, and use them to bring their families to know Jesus.

Saturday 14 March – China

In June we asked you to pray for Joyce, a believer from a Muslim background who was prevented from returning to her home and family after being released from a re-education camp. Give thanks that, after two years of isolation, she has been given permission to move back to her city! Pray for spiritual and emotional healing as she is reunited with her family.

Sunday 15 March – Vietnam

Pray for Sister Qui who was violently beaten by her husband and kicked out of their house. When her pastor raised this with the local authorities, they replied that since she trusts in a 'foreign Western religion', it's 'just right' for her husband to beat her. Pray for justice for Qui and ask God to change her husband's heart towards her.

*Names changed for security reasons

Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



(with persecution), and walking with God, not only for my family, but for many Christian churches in our country. These challenges have taught us to unite more and to trust the Lord in difficulties.

"During my imprisonment, many Christians from all over the world were in solidarity with us. That is evidenced by the letters received with your words of comfort and prayerful support. Many Christians prayed for me and for my family.

"God has shown Himself through many brothers and sisters and also through you. My family and I are very happy for the prayer support and physical care you have provided.

"Early last year, my church was attacked and the church

building was confiscated by the court. Our church is now gathering inside a 40-ton container. We pray now for a new building for our church. We also ask you to participate in prayer and support us in this. The Lord said, 'Call me and I will answer you' (Jeremiah 33:3).

"Your support for us is God's help and we accept this, with a grateful heart, from the Lord. For you, to participate in this good cause may be a service to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 25:34-40). God bless you all!!!"

Thank you for your continued and faithful prayers for Pastor Bahrom and his family (PICTURED BELOW). Please keep praying for him as he adjusts to life outside of prison, and for his church, that God would provide them a new church building to meet in.

Tajikistan **PASTOR BAHROM IS FREE!**

We are delighted to report that Pastor Bahrom Holmatov from Tajikistan has been released early from prison!

He was arrested and imprisoned in April 2017 for three years on false accusations of 'singing extremist songs in church and so inciting religious hatred'. Open Doors supporters have been faithfully praying for him and his family all this time, and on 18 December 2019 he was released

– just in time to spend Christmas with his family!

Pastor Bahrom and his wife Gulnora (PICTURED ABOVE) have written a thank you letter to all those who have been praying for him and supporting him during his ordeal. He writes:

"Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus,

"2017-2019 for us have been years of testing of our faith



| Africa

Monday 16 March

– Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso has seen the greatest rise in Christian persecution in the world, due to the rapid spread of Islamic extremist ideology. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting displaced believers with relief aid and trauma care (see Magazine p20).

Tuesday 17 March – Burkina Faso

Pastor Sawadogo's church is caring for Christians who fled attacks in the north. "Please pray that the peace of God will reign in the country, and our people will be able to go back to their villages," he says. "Pray also for our pastors who have been displaced, that God will put His words of hope on their lips as they minister to their congregations."

Wednesday 18 March – Cameroon

Abdul, a believer from a Muslim background (BMB), had to leave his home when pressure to deny his faith began to affect his health. Open Doors helped him start a business and he now teaches other BMBs the trade and disciples them in their faith. Ask God to bless his business and strengthen the faith of those he apprentices.

Thursday 19 March – Niger

Pray for the widow and four children of Mr Lanli, a pastor from Makalondi who was abducted and shot dead in January. Pray for God's comfort and healing for his

family and for the church which Mr Lanli led.

Friday 20 March – Chad

Last year, we asked you to pray for Moussa, whose wife Mariam and two children were forcibly removed when he became a Christian. Since then, Moussa started earning an income with the help of Open Doors, which enabled him to reunite with his wife. But they had to relocate when Mariam's family tried again to take her away. Pray for protection and for wisdom in dealing with Mariam's family.

Saturday 21 March – Ethiopia

Galgalo* (35) suffered head injuries and a broken arm when a group of Muslim youths broke into his church and disrupted a prayer meeting. Pray for his healing and for courage for the church in the face of such hostility.

Sunday 22 March – Kenya

The Deliverance Church near Malindi was attacked following a land dispute with a local Muslim in which the court ruled in favour of the church. Ask the Lord to provide a place for the congregation to meet while the building is being repaired, and pray that this attack will not rob them of their hope and trust in Jesus.

Monday 23 March – Uganda

Pray for Asman (16), whose mother tried to force him to become a Muslim after she married a prominent Muslim leader and converted from Christianity to Islam. She enrolled him into a Muslim school, but he managed

to escape and find refuge with his pastor. Ask God to strengthen Asman's faith and to change his mother's heart to respect his faith in Jesus.

Tuesday 24 March – Uganda

Robert (17) started going to church after the Lord spoke to him through dreams. When his parents found out, they pressured him to recant, refusing to pay his school fees and rent. "I live at church and have learnt to work with my own hands," he says. "God is alive. I am well rested in this assurance." Give thanks for Robert's faith. Ask God to provide for his needs.

| Central Asia

Wednesday 25 March

Pray for a group of BMBs arrested by police after someone informed security services about their meetings. The police tried to get information from them by beating them. They have since been released. Ask God to heal them and give them courage.

Thursday 26 March

One of those arrested was Hadija*, a Christian mother of four who held secret church meetings in her home. Despite continued pressure she hasn't renounced Jesus or given away information about other believers. Ask God to protect Hadija and her family and give them peace.

Friday 27 March

Pray for Madina*, a Uyghur BMB whose family have threatened and abused her for her choice to follow Jesus.

The pressure is affecting her health. Pray for healing for Madina and for safety for her and her children.

Saturday 28 March

When Khan* came to faith in Jesus, his Muslim relatives beat him, burned down his barn, killed his livestock and threatened to expel his family from the community. Despite this, Khan says: "I decided that I have to forgive them as Jesus Christ forgave my sins." Pray for safety for Khan, his wife and son. Pray for their relatives to meet Jesus.

Sunday 29 March - Uzbekistan

Give thanks that the ministry to deaf people is growing and many are coming to Jesus. Pray for Amina (14), Madina (16) and Zarif* (19), children of deaf parents, who were beaten by their uncle after accepting Jesus. Pray for their healing and safety.

Monday 30 March - Kyrgyzstan

Pray for Janara, the lawyer for Eldos, a young Christian from a Muslim background who was severely beaten for his faith in 2018. Since then, she has faced constant threats from the relatives of Eldos' attackers and the Muslim community. Pray for safety and emotional healing.

Tuesday 31 March – UK&I

Please pray for more speaking opportunities at churches and church groups for Open Doors' staff and volunteer speakers. Ask God to speak through them as they share stories of the courage of our persecuted family.

*Names changed for security reasons

“She is free of her burden” THE WOMEN SEEING CHANGE



Persecuted women are being seen, heard and empowered to reach their God-given potential, thanks to your overwhelming prayers and support for Open Doors' See. Change. campaign.

It's now a year since Open Doors launched the *See. Change.* campaign to restore the hope, dignity and identity of Christian women targeted for both their gender and their faith – women like Aisha from Nigeria, who has been receiving trauma care through Open Doors partners after she was attacked in her own home by Fulani militants. Last year, we asked supporters to pray, give and write letters of support to Aisha and other women like her, to let them know that they are seen by their Christian family worldwide.

Open Doors worker Hanna* recently visited Aisha with hundreds of letters from supporters. As she and her children began opening the large envelopes of letters, Aisha burst out into a spontaneous song of thanksgiving to God.

“Look at this beautiful work!” she said to her boys, who were clearly captivated by the bright pictures. “Who wants this one? Nathan, hold this one and keep it. Oh, see another beautiful one! It has a prayer on it. These people took their time to design and send them to us.”

After putting up many of the cards around her living room, Aisha explained just how much she has been encouraged by your prayers and support.

“Honestly, I want to thank God,” she said. “I can't even express how happy I am. I want to say a big thank you to my brothers and sisters who took the time to write to me. I am so grateful. Thank you. Thank you. May God help you and continue to prosper everything you do.”

Aisha's husband, Dauda, also shared how much of a change he has seen in his wife. “Immediately after she came back home from the trauma healing session, I saw that, through that seminar, God had really healed her from the wounds that were inflicted upon her because of what happened.

“Before the trauma care, she was very shy. She was always alone. But right now, she is outgoing and happy. She is free of her burden. Even when she ponders about what has happened to her, she is able to smile and say, 'It has passed.'”

“I want to express my gratitude to Open Doors.



May God continue to use you to heal others and touch their lives. Thank you so much for helping us.”

PRAY

- Give thanks for God's healing in Aisha's life
- That God will continue to work through Open Doors partners to restore hope and dignity to more women persecuted for their faith and gender.

> You can watch a video of Aisha receiving her cards in the latest edition of *Prayer News*. Order the DVD, or watch online at www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews

*Name changed for security reasons

(BELOW) Your letters and prayers have brought encouragement to Aisha, Dauda and their children



Persecuted Women

Wednesday 1 April

Many Christian women around the world are persecuted both because they are Christian and because they are women. Pray for Open Doors partners restoring dignity and hope to these vulnerable women through trauma care, literacy and livelihood skills, and biblical training.

Thursday 2 April – India

Laxmi* and her son were beaten up by people from their village because they didn't take part in Hindu ceremonies. They face verbal abuse and social boycotting on a daily basis. Pray for their protection, and ask God to change the hearts of those who are persecuting them and draw them to Himself.

Friday 3 April – Nepal

Pray for Lalita* who was persecuted by her husband because of her faith. She now has to provide for her children on her own, working as a labourer on daily wages. Pray for God's provision and pray that her husband will also come to faith in Jesus.

Saturday 4 April – North Korea

Thank you for praying for the secret Bible study groups for North Korean women in China. Six more North Korean refugee women had a precious chance to

be baptised at the end of 2019. Most had travelled three or four hours just for the baptism. Please pray that Jesus will strengthen these sisters and dwell in their hearts through faith.

Sunday 5 April – Tunisia

Pray for a group of female believers in northern Tunisia who are struggling to stand firm in their faith. They want to meet more together to encourage one another. Ask God to make a way for them to meet in safety.

Monday 6 April – Tunisia

Pray for new believer Amira*. When her father found out she had become a Christian he began pressuring her to return to Islam. He wants her to leave university and return to live with the family again. Pray for God's wisdom and perseverance.

Tuesday 7 April – Indonesia

Pray for the first marriage seminar being held in Aceh. The goal of the seminar is for God to restore the marriages of Christian couples. Ask for God's wisdom for the trainers, as gathering the husbands to attend this training has been quite challenging. Pray that the couples will deepen in their love and understanding of one another, so that they can build strong families that will bless their communities.

Easter

Wednesday 8 April – Sri Lanka

As Easter approaches, remember the victims of

last year's Easter bombings (see Magazine p17). Pray for Rebekah, who is recovering from third degree burns. She is scheduled for further treatment later this year. Pray for renewed strength, and for her family as they support her.

Thursday 9 April – Sri Lanka

Pray for the family of Peter, a young boy killed in the Easter bombings (PICTURED BELOW). "We were in great distress with pain after losing our beloved son," they wrote to Open Doors. "Since then, you were there with us to hold, to comfort, to heal. We express our heart-felt gratitude to you all and pray unto Jesus to bless you all in your ministries." Ask God to continue to comfort them and all those mourning loved ones.



Friday 10 April – Good Friday

Many churches in India will lead processions in the streets on Good Friday, remembering the crucifixion of Jesus. Pray for the safety of Christians taking part in these events and that people will be able to celebrate Easter peacefully.

Saturday 11 April – China

Pray for China's Christians as they celebrate Easter this year under a cloud of ever-increasing surveillance and restrictions. Pray that the Easter message gives them renewed hope, and boldness to share the gospel.

Sunday 12 April – Easter Sunday

"Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Pray that all our brothers and sisters who suffer for following Him would 'stand firm and gives themselves fully to the Lord's work, knowing that their labour is not in vain' (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

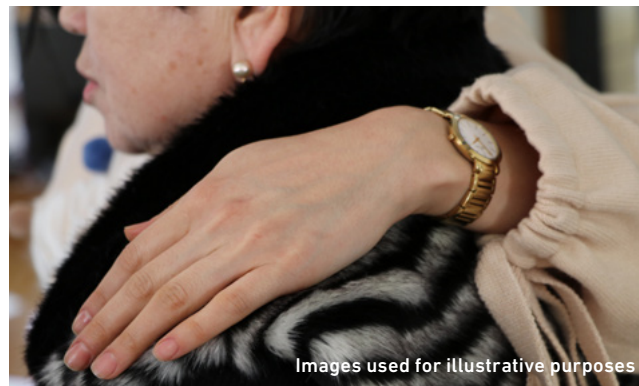
Monday 13 April – Asia

Believers from Muslim backgrounds in Muslim-majority countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia are especially at risk during Christian festivals such as Easter. Pray that they will not give in to fear, and that, like the first disciples, they will experience the risen Jesus standing among them, saying "Peace be with you" (John 20:19).

Tuesday 14 April – Nigeria

Remember the parents of the over 100 girls who remain missing six years after being kidnapped from Chibok high school. Keep praying for the girls' release and pray that they and their parents will know that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

*Name changed for security reasons



Images used for illustrative purposes

“God saved my life with His love”

FINDING JESUS DURING RAMADAN

Halida* from Central Asia was desperate to find God.

She grew up in a Muslim family and was a committed Muslim. But she suffered with mental health problems for years. She was experiencing deep depression and was earnestly seeking healing during Ramadan. She says, “I thought, ‘If God won’t answer me in this pure, holy Ramadan month, I will die.’ I had no strength to resist any more.”

During the first week of Ramadan, a friend came to see Halida and told her about Jesus, explaining that only

in Him could she find the solutions to her problems. Her friend invited her to a Christian home group, but fear held Halida back.

After several weeks, her desperation to be healed overcame her fear. She was touched by what she heard at the meetings, and after a few weeks, she accepted Jesus into her heart. At last, her mind was at peace.

That’s when the persecution started. When Halida’s family discovered that she had become a Christian, they beat her and threw her out

of the house, saying, “You are a shame for the family and relatives.” Fortunately, other Christians rallied around her and helped her to find a house and a job.

though it is underground. Of course, they can arrest us, they can beat us and frighten us – and they do. But they can’t take away the love and hope.”

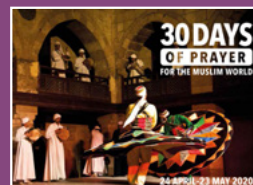
*Name changed for security reasons

A passion for women’s ministry arose in Halida, and today she works with women suffering from mental health problems, as well as being a secret home group leader. “I know that the persecution I experienced was not in vain,” she says. “I learned what my purpose is, my ministry in Him. I am going to serve women who experience violence and persecution in their families... God saved and changed my life with His love. Now I want to share it with other people.”

Halida and other believers like her are facing growing persecution. But it is not diminishing her desire to serve Jesus. She says, “It is strange – with the growth of persecution, we can see, at the same time, the growing need for the gospel and for growing the ministry, even

PRAY FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD THIS RAMADAN:
24 April – 23 May

Millions of Muslims around the world will be seeking God in fasting and prayer this Ramadan. The *30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World* resource can help you pray that many more Muslims will discover the love of Jesus. Order your FREE copy today at www.opendoorsuk.org or call our Inspire team on **01993 460015**.



Hope for the Middle East

Wednesday 15 April – Iraq
Iraq named a new prime minister in February after four months of anti-government protests in which hundreds of protesters died. Pray that Mr Allawi and his new government will lead the Iraqi people with wisdom and righteousness and restore peace and stability in Iraq.

Thursday 16 April – Iraq
One of the demands of some Iraqi protesters has been to change the constitution, which they consider to be unfair to minority groups such as Christians. A group of Iraqi Christian activists are speaking up for equality and coexistence. Pray that the voice of justice will be heard.

Friday 17 April – Syria
The Syrian authorities recently began to reject permission for training activities run by our local partner. Three trainings were cancelled and at least six rescheduled. Ask God to intervene and to guide the team to alternative ways to provide training.

Saturday 18 April – Syria
Praise God for the relief aid that was distributed to vulnerable families over the winter, thanks to your support. "Thankfully it is saving many families from the cold," says Nazira, who is responsible for displaced families in Hassaka. Pray for stamina and protection for Nazira and other

volunteers delivering aid.

Sunday 19 April – Lebanon
After months of anti-government protests, many Lebanese people are disillusioned with politics and distrustful of the country's leaders. Pray that the churches in Lebanon will be strong and attractive communities that bring the good news of Jesus to those who are losing hope.

India

Monday 20 April
Pray for 15 Christian families who are fighting a court case over their land – they are being prevented from farming their land because of their Christian faith. Please pray for a favourable outcome for these families.

Tuesday 21 April
Pray for a pastor who was forced to flee his village after extremists threatened him with death because he has been bringing many people to Christ. He wants to go back to continue pastoring the Christian families there. Pray for his protection and that he will soon be able to return to strengthen these families in their faith.

Wednesday 22 April
Many Christian ministries and organisations across India are losing their FCRA registration, which is needed in order to receive donations from abroad. Some believe the hidden agenda of the government is to stop Christian ministry in India.

Ask God to continue to provide for these organisations so that their work can continue.

Thursday 23 April
Please pray for income generation projects and vocational training projects being run in different parts of India by Open Doors partners. Pray that God will use these projects to give our brothers and sisters the dignity of being able to support themselves and their families.

Ramadan

Friday 24 April
Pray for the hundreds of millions of Muslims across the world observing Ramadan. Ask God to reveal Himself to many Muslims as they pray and fast, and pray that many will discover the love of Jesus.

Saturday 25 April
Ramadan is a lonely time for many believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs). Pray that they will know the Lord's presence and comfort, and pray for spiritual protection so they will not be pressured to return to Islam at this time.

Sunday 26 April – Sub-Saharan Africa
When Muslims come to faith in Christ, they often face physical danger. Attacks on Christian communities in this region during Ramadan are not uncommon. Pray for physical protection for Christians this Ramadan.

Monday 27 April – Sub-Saharan Africa
"Pray for the church to wake up

to the needs of BMBs," says an Open Doors expert. "Some are suffering deep psychological challenges: having lost loved ones, being beaten, rejected." Pray that churches will be places where BMBs are warmly welcomed and enjoy spiritual and emotional care during Ramadan.

Tuesday 28 April – Indonesia
Pray for believers from Muslim backgrounds as they share their faith during Ramadan. "Ramadan is actually the perfect time to preach the gospel," says Lina*. "It is easy to engage Muslims during this time and tell them about God's salvation."

Wednesday 29 April – Gulf
In some parts of the Gulf, Christians, if seen drinking water or accidentally consuming foods, can be taken in by the authorities and have their heads shaved as a public punishment for eating during Ramadan. "Please pray for us," says a local Open Doors partner. "We feel the stress and the extra scrutiny during Ramadan. Pray for strength, patience and tenderness in our attitude."

Thursday 30 April – Malaysia
During Ramadan, secret believers face increased scrutiny and find it difficult to hide their faith in Christ. One shared, "My family would always ask if I have already fasted and prayed. I lied, though I know it was wrong. I have no choice; if not, I will be exposed." Pray for wisdom and boldness to do what is right.

*Name changed for security reasons



Clinging to the Rock

“What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived’ - the things God has prepared for those who love him”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

How do you persevere in your faith when the future is uncertain? Reema* from Nepal has experienced more hardships in her 22 years than many people do in a lifetime. And yet she is able to say with confidence, “I know God has prepared the best for those who love Him, and we should always hold on to God and trust in Him.”

Reema and her family were isolated and rejected by their Buddhist community after choosing to follow Jesus. Her father then left the family, abandoning them.

Reema’s mother took them to the city for work. But the owners of the hostel where they stayed beat and abused Reema and her siblings.

Reema grew so desperate that she tried to take her own life. But God intervened and, surprised and amazed that she survived, she realised

that He must have a greater plan in mind.

Thanks to your prayers and support, Reema and her family have since left the hostel and she has begun to study theology. She says, “I never felt like renouncing my faith, even when I was going through the tough times in the hostel... God has never left me alone and has answered my prayers through people like you.”

Heavenly Father, thank You that You have promised never to leave me or forsake me. Help me to cling to You always, and guide me through the dark times. Amen.

*Name changed for security reasons



Order your FREE copy of the World Watch List Top 50 guide and map for more inspirational stories and prayer requests from the persecuted church. Go to www.opendoorsuk.org



Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney, OX29 6WG
T 01993 460015
E inspire@opendoorsuk.org

FIND US ON:

www.opendoorsuk.org

