



WORLD WATCH LIST 2023

30 YEARS OF RESEARCH

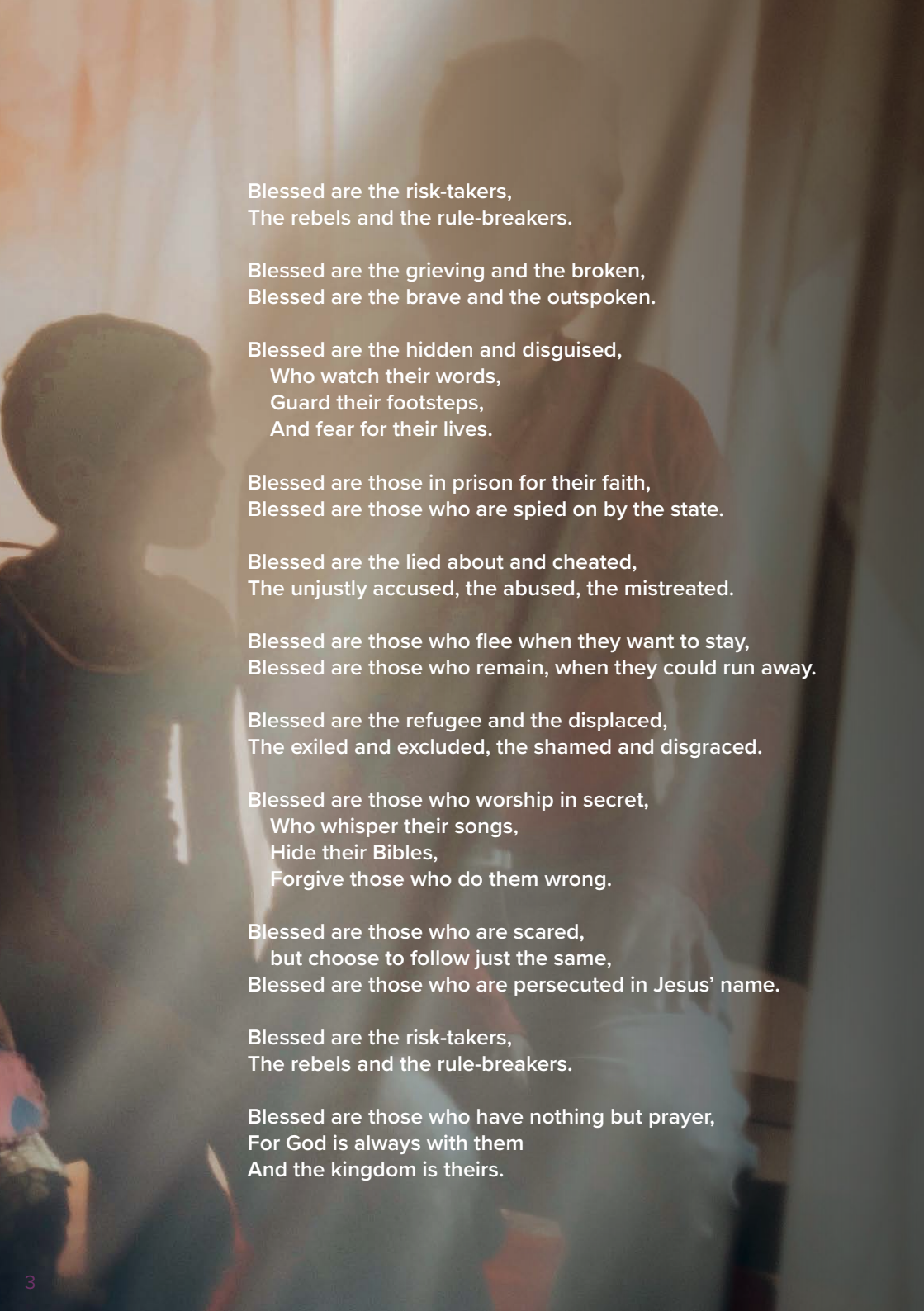


TOP 50

THE COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS
RISK EVERYTHING FOR CHRIST

A photograph showing the silhouettes of a woman and a young child in profile, facing right. They are set against a warm, golden-brown background that suggests a window or a light source. The woman is wearing a patterned garment, and the child is also wearing a patterned garment. The overall mood is contemplative and intimate.

**BLESSED
ARE THE
RISK-TAKERS**



Blessed are the risk-takers,
The rebels and the rule-breakers.

Blessed are the grieving and the broken,
Blessed are the brave and the outspoken.

Blessed are the hidden and disguised,
Who watch their words,
Guard their footsteps,
And fear for their lives.

Blessed are those in prison for their faith,
Blessed are those who are spied on by the state.

Blessed are the lied about and cheated,
The unjustly accused, the abused, the mistreated.

Blessed are those who flee when they want to stay,
Blessed are those who remain, when they could run away.

Blessed are the refugee and the displaced,
The exiled and excluded, the shamed and disgraced.

Blessed are those who worship in secret,
Who whisper their songs,
Hide their Bibles,
Forgive those who do them wrong.

Blessed are those who are scared,
but choose to follow just the same,
Blessed are those who are persecuted in Jesus' name.

Blessed are the risk-takers,
The rebels and the rule-breakers.

Blessed are those who have nothing but prayer,
For God is always with them
And the kingdom is theirs.



THE HEIGHTENING RISKS OF FOLLOWING JESUS WORLDWIDE

More than 360 million Christians worldwide suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith – that’s a staggering 1 in 7 believers.

This is according to the Open Doors World Watch List, an annual ranking of the countries where Christians face the most persecution. This year marks its 30th iteration and during this time hostility against our brothers and sisters worldwide has intensified.

In 1993, Christians faced high to extreme levels of persecution in 40 countries. This number has nearly doubled to 76 countries in 2023. In the top 50 alone, 312 million Christians now face very high or extreme levels.

These sobering statistics must provoke a response from us. “If one

part suffers, every part suffers with it,” the apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:26. Your prayers and support will help enable our brothers and sisters to keep following Jesus, no matter the risks.

JIHADISTS SEEK TO MAKE AFRICA FIRST ISLAMIC CONTINENT

Several trends have emerged from the latest World Watch List, including violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa hitting new heights as jihadists seek to make Africa the first Islamic continent. This is already having catastrophic consequences for the church – and the risks may yet worsen.

Just as poorer nations were beginning



Displaced Christians queue for relief aid in Congo DR

to recover from the pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine raised food, fertilizer and energy prices. This – alongside political instability, weak governance and climate

change – has made the region fertile ground for the activities of jihadist groups as well as criminal gangs and mercenary soldiers, with believers among those severely affected and often targeted. Tens of thousands have been forced from their homes, putting them at further risk of attack.

Across the 26 nations that recorded at least high levels of persecution against Christians, the number of violent attacks experienced by believers rose by five per cent. In half of these countries, including Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Niger and Mozambique, the levels of violence hit extremely high levels.

Persecution of Christians in Nigeria – Africa's most populous nation – has reached unprecedented levels, with violence spreading to the Christian-majority south. Boko Haram and Fulani militants, together with armed bandits, are causing untold devastation to Christian communities.

In places that implement Sharia (Islamic law), like Somalia, Comoros and parts of Nigeria, violence goes hand in hand with serious pressure in other areas of life, including work, school and the family.

CHINA LOOKS TO REDEFINE HUMAN RIGHTS

Another trend centers on China, who are leading subtle attempts to redefine human rights not in terms of dignity and worth, as it's been classically understood, but as the 'right' to development and happiness.

It may seem a subtle shift, but it represents a damaging move towards widespread authoritarianism, with regimes exerting greater control over people – by claiming that what the people really want is 'stability' and 'security'. It's highly concerning for Christians, whose values and beliefs undermine the intentions of autocratic states, to the extent that believers risk being branded as 'troublemakers', 'disturbers of the peace' and even 'terrorists'.

This is the backdrop to the Chinese authorities tightening their grip on Christians, who are seen as a particular threat to President Xi Jinping's hold on power. In March 2022, draconian laws were introduced that require a permit to share religious material on the internet – but this is only given to state-approved religious organizations, such as the Three Self Patriotic Movement.

All of this is enforced by the country's increasingly sophisticated use of surveillance. Sharing 'illegal' content such as sermons and podcasts, even on social media, is highly risky. Tracking apps used to control Covid-19 have been redeployed, while the country's notorious Social Credit System – which monitors people's behavior and rewards accordingly – has become a top priority for the



Chinese government. For Christians in China, there is little room to hide.

Some observers believe that the ruling Communist Party is looking to rewrite the terms of its contract with society, focusing less on economic advancement and more on the promise of security and wellbeing – or, in other words, a society rooted in the new human rights.

Where China leads, others follow. This toxic mixture of authoritarianism, nationalism and technology has been adopted by other countries like India, Russia and Turkey, with many other nations not far behind. This is a deeply alarming trend for millions of believers across the world.



CLINGING TO HOPE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In many ways, the redefinition of human rights is already emerging in the Middle East, with many believers, especially converts from Islam, deemed troublemakers and labeled a threat to national security. A case in point is Iran, where house churches are regularly raided and Christians sent to prison.

It's not the only risk facing Christians in the region. In places like Iraq and Syria, the number of believers has dropped significantly, in large part due to the continued impact of so-called Islamic State's emergence nearly a decade ago. Unemployment among young Christians is high, while children are vulnerable to bullying from peers and teachers at school.

Syria is rarely in the news today but conflict persists – last year, dozens of churches and Christian buildings were damaged in attacks by Turkish armed forces and at least five Christians kidnapped.

The challenges reinforce the importance of our *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, which through your support have established 160 Centers of Hope in Iraq and Syria. These are enabling many believers to remain in the region and have hope for the future.

INCREASING OPPOSITION IN LATIN AMERICA

The region that has seen the sharpest increase in persecution is Latin America, with four countries rising substantially in this year's list. Mexico has risen five places to 38, Colombia has gone from 30 to 22, Cuba has risen ten spots to 27, while Nicaragua jumps from 61 to 50, putting it in the top 50 for the first time.

Corrupt and ineffective governments, particularly in the rural areas of Mexico and Colombia, have created space for criminal groups and ethnic leaders to grow in influence and become drivers of persecution.

In Cuba and Nicaragua, repressive governments are intensifying efforts to suppress those they deem opponents to their rule. In Nicaragua especially, the silencing of Christians has become increasingly apparent, with churches that speak out against injustice and human rights violations by the government viewed as destabilizing agents.

WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

There have been moves towards greater

tolerance of religious freedom in several Gulf states, including Bahrain and United Arab Emirates. This is within a moderate Islamic framework that seeks to counter extremism and make their countries more hospitable for Christians. In such places – as well as in Egypt, where there is an increased focus on ‘national unity’ – hate speech against believers from historical and expatriate communities is often not tolerated, although radical elements still exist within their societies.

Elsewhere in the Gulf, Qatar has seen a reduction in opposition towards Christians. This is largely due to no churches being closed in 2022, which may be linked to the FIFA World Cup and the spotlight it put on the country’s human rights record. That said, a significant number of churches closed during the pandemic have not been allowed to reopen.

BLESSED ARE THE TROUBLEMAKERS

In Acts 17, believers in Thessalonica were dragged before the authorities by furious locals who claimed, “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here...” (17:6) In the eyes of many, the early believers were ‘troublemakers’ and ‘disturbers of the peace’ – the very accusations increasingly facing many Christians today.

The early church took huge risks to carry the gospel to the places where they were scattered. Their extraordinary legacy lives on to this day – not only in the way they began spreading the gospel to all nations, but in their example of courageous faith that our persecuted family are seeking to follow today, regardless of the risks involved.

30 YEARS OF THE WORLD WATCH LIST

What inspired the first Open Doors World Watch List in 1993?

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, which reduced the need for Bible smuggling in the region, released funds and resources for use elsewhere. In 1991, a team were tasked with researching the countries where Open Doors was active and where the work could expand to. Two years later, the first list was produced.

How did the list change in the 1990s?

Initially, the list was not made public; it was primarily used by Open Doors to direct their work. But towards the end of the decade it was made public, to provide people with an overall picture of persecution to inspire support and prayers.

How has the list changed our understanding of persecution?

It’s revealed the complexity of persecution. This includes how multiple factors can drive hostility, how persecution affects believers in different ways, and how persecution can be subtle as well as violent.

What are some of the key trends over the past 30 years?

Persecution has grown and intensified in Africa, mainly due to the rise of jihadism. The latest list bears this out, with violence against Christians hitting new heights. Opposition has also intensified in many Asian countries owing to a rise in authoritarianism and Islamic expression.



1 NORTH KOREA

ENCOUNTERING JESUS

AFTER ESCAPING

NORTH KOREA

“We have to take risks,” says Sister J. She and Sister R are Open Doors fieldworkers serving women in China who have escaped North Korea – the most dangerous country in the world in which to be a Christian. “But even though it is risky and we know it is not safe, we still have to do it.”

Nothing about this work, or the journeys women make from North Korea, is safe. But were it not for the courage of workers like Sister J, women scarred by the brutal dictatorship of the North Korean regime, and the trafficking they are caught in whilst making their escape, wouldn't find the care they yearn for. And they wouldn't encounter Jesus.

DANGEROUS JOURNEYS

North Korea is experiencing severe famine in the wake of the pandemic, leading to many people fleeing the country in search of jobs to support their families back home.

However, approval for travel is only given to government officials and the upper class, meaning people must flee illegally – and this is very dangerous. Those who avoid being caught or drowning in a freezing river as they attempt to cross borders often end up being sold as wives or mothers if lured by a broker under false promises.

These are the women Open Doors fieldworkers are reaching by running Bible studies and giving practical support. Helping them, and even gaining their trust, takes time. “But as the years go by, the sisters come just to hear the talks from the fieldworkers and to share the Bible verses,” says Sister R. “Through this they encounter Jesus Christ.” Some get baptized, whilst others go on to help the ministry.

The risks these ladies take in choosing to follow Jesus cannot be exaggerated. They are already deemed an enemy of the North

Korean state by escaping – becoming a Christian only entrenches this. Meanwhile, the Bible studies are vulnerable to raids by the Chinese authorities. “They are taking risks all the time,” says Sister J. “Any time they could get captured, deported back to North Korea and imprisoned.”

“THEY EXPERIENCED SOMETHING VERY UNUSUAL AND VERY HEAVENLY BECAUSE OF YOUR PRAYERS”

The ladies embrace these grave risks because of their love for Jesus. “They never lose their hope. They are so excited to know Jesus Christ, even though they are still suffering and still hiding,” Sister J continues.

HEAVENLY EXPERIENCES

The extraordinary faith and courage of these North Korean women, and those serving them, would not be possible without the prayers and support of Christians worldwide.

“There are times when they are traveling when they are caught by the guards and their ID is checked,” says Sister R of some of the fieldworkers’ experiences. “Those are very dangerous times because the ministry’s location could be revealed.

But then the guards check the people in front of them and they just pass over the fieldworker and check the people behind them. And they think, ‘What’s happening? Why don’t they check us?’ And then they say ‘Oh, it’s surely a miracle!’”

“There were many testimonies from the fieldworkers that they experienced something very unusual and something very heavenly because of your prayers,” she continues. “There are times when they are discouraged because things seem so closed down and seem not to be working. But during their prayers they feel, ‘Surely the brothers and sisters of the world are praying for me, because I have this sudden light or courage.’”

But the impact of your prayers doesn’t end there, because the sisters are working towards a bigger vision – making the risks even more worth taking. “It’s also about strengthening the church inside North Korea,” says Sister R. “We cannot go inside the country, but these women will eventually form a church in North Korea.”

These stories reinforce how much your prayers and support are needed to help the persecuted church stand strong in their faith and share it with others, not just in North Korea but across the world.



Illustrative image of secret Bible study with North Korean believers



Secret believers around the world and those who work with them must go to great lengths to avoid being caught (image is illustrative)

"PROTECT ALL THOSE

A PRAYER FOR SECRET BELIEVERS

Lord Jesus,

Be with all Your disciples who are under suspicion,
all Your followers who are being followed,
whose lives are lived against a background hum of fear.

Give comfort and courage to the watched and the whispered about,
the spied upon and the shadowed,
those who have to hide their beliefs, disguise their actions,
and watch their steps.

Refresh and renew those exhausted from the need for constant vigilance.

Protect all those who gather in secret.

Strengthen the underground networks of believers around the world.

Give wisdom to their leaders, so that they know whom to trust,
when to speak and when to stay silent.

Thank You for their faith and perseverance,
and for the courage of those who,
despite the penalties for being caught,
still try to share Your truth and love.

Amen.

WHO GATHER IN SECRET"



WHO ARE OPEN DOORS?

Over 360 million Christians around the world face persecution and discrimination for their faith.

For over 65 years Open Doors has stood alongside these faithful brothers and sisters, strengthening and supporting those who risk everything to follow Christ. Our global underground networks operate in over 70 countries, including some of the most dangerous places on earth.

At heart, the work of Open Doors is always a partnership with the church – both in the countries where Christians are persecuted, and the countries where Christians are free.

Where Christians face persecution, we support the church by smuggling Bibles and Christian literature, offering legal advice, training church leaders and other Christians, and providing vital practical support such as trauma care and emergency aid.

Where Christians are free, we help the church to pray, give and speak up for their persecuted brothers and sisters.

So, it's not 'us and them'. It is all of us together, one family of believers, working in partnership to bring the light and love of Christ into some of the darkest places on earth.

ABOVE Nigerian refugees receiving aid from Open Doors partners at a camp for internally displaced people

WHAT IS THE WORLD WATCH LIST?

The Open Doors World Watch List is a unique, reliable, comprehensive ranking of the countries where the persecution of Christians is most extreme.

UNIQUE...

because, as far as possible, our data is gathered at grass-roots level, collected from in-country networks and local partners on the ground.




RELIABLE...

because over three decades, the list has gained a reputation for credible, dependable information. Our approach and analysis is independently audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom.

COMPREHENSIVE...

because it measures persecution in all its forms: not only violence, but also the freedom Christians have to practice their faith in their private, family, community, national and church life.

This data is converted into a points system, which is then ranked into categories:

-  **HIGH** 41-60 points
-  **VERY HIGH** 61-80 points
-  **EXTREME** 81-100 points

You can find more details on our methodology and research at opendoorsus.org/en-US/persecution/methodology

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY 'PERSECUTION'?

Persecution takes many forms, from insults and abuse, to discrimination in education and the workplace, to outright violence. We might characterize these different forms as 'smash' and 'squeeze'.

The 'smash' represents overt violence against Christians because of their faith: bombing, shooting, rapes, kidnappings, forcible evictions.

The 'squeeze' represents the suffocating restrictions faced by many Christians in daily life: red tape and legal restrictions, an inability to publicly display their faith, discrimination woven into the fabric of society.

'Smash' is physical, visible, violent. 'Squeeze' is insidious, structural, suffocating.

But both have the same aim: the erasure of Christianity in their country, region, tribe or family.



WHAT CAN I DO?

Your prayers, gifts and actions will strengthen persecuted Christians living in the countries where following Jesus comes with the greatest risk.

GIVE

Give an isolated Christian a precious Bible, help rebuild shattered homes and churches, provide persecuted Christians with vital food and medicine. Whatever you give will make a difference.

PRAY

Sign up for weekly emails full of stories of courageous faith to inspire your prayers. Our website also has a wealth of prayer resources for individuals and churches.

“The weakest light in you can break the greatest darkness.”

SECRET BELIEVER IN THE MIDDLE EAST



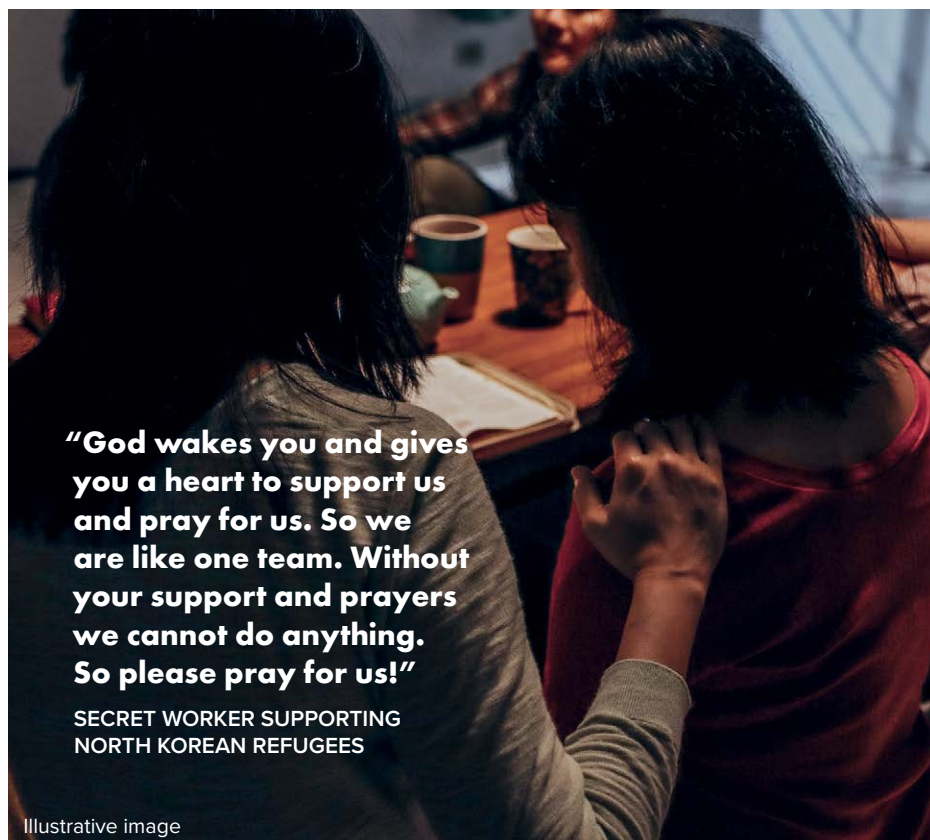
TOP Open Doors relief aid delivered to orphans in Central African Republic; this kind of help is only made possible by our volunteers, those who pray for the work and those who raise funds.

PRAYING WITH THE WORLD WATCH LIST?

The World Watch List is more than a collection of facts or statistics. It's an invitation to stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters in prayer. And throughout this book you will find inspiring testimonies, quotes, Bible verses and a map to help you pray for your persecuted family.

Many of our supporters like to pray for a country each week. As well as prayer points for each country, there are written prayers for different kinds of persecuted Christians.

And you can sign up for weekly emails that will give you the very latest news and prayer requests from around the world at opendoorsus.org/en-US/getinvolved/pray



“God wakes you and gives you a heart to support us and pray for us. So we are like one team. Without your support and prayers we cannot do anything. So please pray for us!”

SECRET WORKER SUPPORTING
NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES

Illustrative image

1

NORTH KOREA



POPULATION

26 million / 400,000 Christians

LEADER

Kim Jong-un

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

North Korea remains a brutally hostile place for Christians.

If discovered, they are either sent to atrocious labor camps or executed – and their families will share a similar fate. Christians have no freedom and it's almost impossible for believers to gather.

The reason for such extreme persecution is that Christianity is seen as a particular threat to the dictatorial ideology and governance of the country's regime. Christians are viewed as enemies of both the leadership and society.

Open Doors secret workers are keeping 80,000 North Korean believers alive with vital food and aid through secret networks in China, as well as providing shelter and discipleship training for North Korean refugees at safe houses in China.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the Holy Spirit will pour supernatural peace and strength into believers held in labor camps
- That Christians who bravely gather in secret will not be discovered
- That authorities will allow the country to be helped by the wider world.

2

SOMALIA



POPULATION

16.8 million / A few hundred Christians

LEADER

Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

The violent insurgent group al-Shabaab has repeatedly expressed its desire to eradicate Christians from the country, and have intensified their hunt for Christians.

Christians from Muslim backgrounds are particularly regarded as high-value targets and may be killed on the spot if discovered. Christians also face serious persecution from their family and community, as Somali society expects all Somalis to be Muslim. Any deviation from this is very dangerous.

Open Doors supports Somali believers across the Horn of Africa through discipleship training and equipping them to cope with severe persecution.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace and for God's protection against rising extremism over His church
- That isolated Somali believers will know God's comfort and find ways to grow in their faith
- For God's wisdom and protection over Open Doors' work in the Horn of Africa and that it will bear much fruit.

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS



2 SOMALIA

NALA'S STORY

Nala* knew that exploring Christianity through social media was dangerous – but she couldn't help it. "I started to look for more videos and found others who shared the Word of God," says Nala. "I connected with them through Facebook and asked them to tell me about Christ."

After a while, she made the life-changing choice to follow Jesus! She met with other secret believers and was eventually baptized. But

she had to keep her faith secret from her Muslim family – they would be furious if they found out. They might even kill her.

Unfortunately, Nala's family became suspicious and discovered that she was a Christian. They locked her up in a room in their home and pledged her in marriage to a sheikh who already had two wives. But a few days before the wedding, Nala ran away. She hid with Christian friends, who helped her to escape the country

and find spiritual and discipleship support.

"Jesus had changed me," Nala says, confident in her decision to become a Christian. "I realized that I didn't choose Him, but He chose me. I didn't go out looking for Him, but He found me. Now I have joy. I know that until I came to know Jesus, I knew nothing at all."

*Name changed for security reasons. Image is representative



Yemeni Christians at a secret house church meeting. In Yemen, it is illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity. If discovered, converts could be killed by their families or extremist groups. Those attending this meeting are literally risking their lives.

3

YEMEN

0  100**89**

POPULATION

31.2 million / A few thousand Christians

LEADER

President Rashad al-Alimi

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Yemen is strongly tribal and it's illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity. Yemeni Christian converts are at great risk of being ostracized, expelled, or even killed by their families, clans and tribes.

Islamic extremist groups threaten so-called 'apostates' with death if they do not return to Islam. In other areas, including those controlled by the Islamist Houthis, converts risk imprisonment. In detention centers, Christian detainees have reportedly suffered physical and mental torture.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ in Yemen by distributing relief aid and Christian literature, and offering shelter, protection and livelihood training to persecuted believers and their relatives.

PLEASE PRAY

- For secret believers who choose to follow Christ, despite the dangers
- For humanitarian aid to reach all people in need, including those on the margins of society
- That God would change the atmosphere of scrutiny and mistrust so that all Yemenis can live safely.

4

ERITREA

0  100**89**

POPULATION

3.7 million / 1.7 million

LEADER

President Isaias Afwerki

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Believers in Eritrea who gather outside the three officially recognized and closely monitored denominations – Orthodox, Catholic and Lutheran – do so at risk of extreme persecution.

An estimated 1,000 Christians are indefinitely detained in Eritrean prisons, not officially charged with any crime. Some leaders of 'unofficial' churches have been imprisoned for more than a decade.

Despite this hostility from the authorities – as well as the pressures converts experience from families and communities – the church in Eritrea is seeing remarkable growth.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Eritrea to provide economic empowerment projects, discipleship and persecution survival training.

PLEASE PRAY

- That those in power in Eritrea have a change of heart towards Christians
- For supernatural strength, hope and joy for imprisoned believers and their families
- For Open Doors' work to strengthen new believers coming to faith in such a challenging context.

5

LIBYA

**88**

POPULATION

7 million / 35,400 Christians

LEADER

Interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh

PERSECUTION SCORE -3

Libya is effectively a lawless land where native and migrant Christians face extreme danger. With no effective government, Islamic extremists and organized crime groups both wield power. They target, kidnap, and even kill Christians.

If a Libyan from a Muslim background becomes a Christian, they are likely to face intense pressure and abuse from their community, or worse. It is supposedly legal to convert, but this law is ambiguous and often abused or ignored.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership training, discipleship, livelihood support, pastoral care and prayer support.

PLEASE PRAY

- For nationwide stability, law and order to come quickly to Libya
- That God would break the power of the organized criminal gangs exploiting vulnerable people
- For Christians to be able to safely communicate and encourage one another.

6

NIGERIA

**88**

POPULATION

216.8 million / 100 million Christians

LEADER

President Muhammadu Buhari

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Attacks by Islamic militant groups have increased consistently since 2015, but the government has failed to prevent the rise in violence, which affects all Nigerians but particularly Christians.

The violence is most pervasive in the north, where militant groups inflict murder, physical injury, abduction and sexual violence on their victims. Christians are dispossessed of their land and their means of livelihood. Many live as internally displaced people or refugees.

Open Doors works through local church partners to strengthen Christians in Nigeria with discipleship and persecution survival training, trauma care, relief aid and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for the courageous faith of believers in Nigeria, who refuse to deny Christ despite the dangers
- For an end to the violence inflicted by militant groups across Nigeria
- That Open Doors partners can reach more survivors of violence and abduction with trauma care and persecution survival training.

PASTOR MARCOS' STORY

6 NIGERIA

Pastor Marcos was leading a church in Adamawa State, northern Nigeria, when Boko Haram attacked. Villages were ransacked, churches burned, and men and women murdered. When the violence subsided, Marcos found that people were reluctant to return to church.

“When you walk with the Lord and these things happen to you, there is disappointment, fear and loss of trust and hope,” he says. “My own spiritual life was greatly shaken because I was so afraid. But still the Word of God kept reminding me that, for anyone who puts their trust in God, He won’t forsake them.”

After the attacks, many believers no longer believed they could depend on God to help them. But Pastor Marcos persevered in inviting people one-by-one to renew their trust in God.

“This persecution has become like a fertilizer for the gospel,” he testifies. “Our church had only 200 members before Boko Haram

came, but now we have 300 to 400 members.

“We do not pray that God will take away the hardship, but that God should give us the grace to be able to stand. Since our Master, Jesus, went through this suffering, we also who have become His followers will go through it. But in the end, we will be victorious.”



BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS

7

PAKISTAN



POPULATION

197 million / 4.1 million Christians

LEADER

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

Christians in Pakistan are considered second-class citizens and face discrimination in every aspect of life.

Although there were no major attacks against churches last year, there are almost constant attacks against individuals. There are growing numbers of Christian (and other minority religion) girls being abducted, abused and forcibly converted to Islam. The number of cases of blasphemy, which can be punishable by death, continues to rise.

Open Doors is active in the Persian Gulf countries through a network of partner churches, but for security reasons, we cannot say what we do where.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Pakistan's blasphemy laws will be changed so that Christians will be safe from false accusations
- For protection for women who suffer domestic violence and girls who are forced into marriage
- For wisdom and protection for those reaching out to help communities displaced by last year's floods.

8

IRAN



POPULATION

86 million / 1.2 million Christians

LEADER

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Iran is ruled by an increasingly strict Islamic regime, which views Iranian house churches as a threat. Church members have received long prison sentences involving physical and mental abuse.

The state is increasing its surveillance and control over people's lives, as last year's protests by Iranian women have highlighted. Muslim background believers must meet in secret, with the risk of being caught and prosecuted for 'crimes against national security'.

This year has seen an increase in reported violence against Christians. Many choose to emigrate.

Open Doors partners support the church in Iran with online ministry presence, Christian multimedia initiatives and advocacy.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Jesus will set many more hearts free in Iran
- That imprisoned believers will know God's loving presence
- For strong faith and courage for the Iranian Christians meeting in secret.

"TRANSFORM THEIR CAGES

A PRAYER FOR THOSE IN PRISON

Lord God,

We pray for those who are imprisoned because of their faith:
the unjustly accused and illegally detained,
the set up, lied about, framed;
those sent to labor camps or political prisons;
those enduring dirt and filth, burning heat, numbing cold.

Give them courage to face the beatings,
patience to bear the lies,
and hope to see beyond the bars and the barbed wire.

May we do all we can to let them know that they are not forgotten,
and so lighten their burden of loneliness.

Transform their cages into churches,
their cells into places of worship and witness,
so that like Your Son, who was accused, arrested,
subjected to a show trial,
beaten and executed,
they may emerge victorious,
and rise to new life.

Amen.

INTO CHURCHES"



Shafika (whose name has been changed) is a refugee from Afghanistan, living in Central Asia. "It is very difficult to live in Afghanistan now," she says. "If a woman refuses to wear the hijab, she will either be killed or severely beaten."

9

AFGHANISTAN



©IMB



POPULATION

40.8 million / Thousands of Christians

LEADER

Hibatullah Akhundzada (interim Taliban government)

PERSECUTION SCORE -14

Despite dropping from first place to ninth, Afghan Christians remain in grave danger. Many have fled or been forced further underground, making them less visible for attack.

In the past year, the Taliban have focused on consolidating power, not targeting non-Muslims, resulting in fewer violent incidents against Christians that are clearly linked to their faith. However, since leaving Islam is considered shameful and punishable by death under Islamic law, converts risk devastating consequences at the hands of the authorities or even their own family, tribe or clan if discovered.

Open Doors raises prayer for persecuted believers in Afghanistan, and provides practical support to Afghan Christians forced to flee to neighboring countries.

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection and presence to surround secret believers
- That those who have fled the country will have all their needs met
- That the Holy Spirit will soften the hearts of the Taliban leaders towards women and religious minorities.

10

SUDAN



POPULATION

46 million / 2 million Christians

LEADER

Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan

PERSECUTION SCORE +4

Once a 'good news story', instability in Sudan has led to persecution intensifying.

Christian converts from Islam are still vulnerable to extreme persecution from both their communities and their own families. Since the military coup in 2022, four churches have been forced to close, and trying to build new churches is still extremely difficult. Although the death penalty for leaving Islam has now been abolished, there are fears that this punishment could be reinstated.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Sudan to strengthen persecuted Christians through persecution survival training, discipleship training and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace to prevail in Sudan and that God will establish rulers who enforce lasting respect for human rights
- For church leaders engaging with their Muslim counterparts to have constructive dialogue
- That believers from Muslim backgrounds will grow in their knowledge of Christ.

11 INDIA



82

POPULATION

1.4 billion / 69.5 million Christians

LEADER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

Only Hindus are truly Indians. That's the false ideology on the rise in many parts of India.

Christians increasingly experience social exclusion, discrimination at work and false rumors which can lead to vigilante violence. Most at risk are new believers from Hinduism – they can face brutal assaults or even murder.

Hindu extremists target church leaders, their wives and children with violence to sow fear in the Christian community. In some states, they seem to face no legal consequences.

Open Doors partners strengthen the church in India by providing Bibles, emergency aid, persecution survival training, and livelihood and community development projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- For a change of narrative around Indian identity to one that accepts minority faiths
- For protection over church leaders and their families
- That converts' genuine faith would have a powerful effect on their families and neighbors.

12 SYRIA



80

POPULATION

19.4 million / 600,000 Christians

LEADER

President Bashar al-Assad

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

Years of conflict and instability have created an environment in which persecution can flourish with impunity.

In the few areas controlled by Islamic militants, leaders of traditional churches are particularly targeted for kidnap or attack, and most church buildings have either been demolished or repurposed as Islamic centers. Even in government-controlled areas, evangelism is seen as a threat to social stability and is therefore heavily suppressed.

Open Doors partners strengthen the church in Syria through Bible distribution, discipleship and leadership training, trauma counseling, relief aid and practical support for internally displaced people, and Centers of Hope, which support Syrian Christians and their communities.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians will stand firm in their faith and continue to be salt and light in their communities
- For ongoing provision for Centers of Hope restoring and caring for war-weary people
- For peace and stability in the country.

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS

JOUAN'S STORY

12 SYRIA



Like many young Syrians, Jouan's normal life was uprooted by the civil war. Originally from a Muslim background, he secretly fled with his family to Lebanon. When he was about 15, a local pastor took him to church and gave him a Bible.

Jouan eventually became a Christian – but practicing his faith was difficult. “None of my family were believers; they didn’t accept it. I didn’t go to the church; I was not allowed to go. So I spent these four years alone... It was difficult, but God was with me all the time. He was giving me the power to continue.”

Eventually, Jouan’s mother came to faith after experiencing healing. And he is praying for his father to come to believe too. Jouan knows that God has a future for him and his family.

“We have nothing, but we have God. He can give us everything. He can do miracles and He can change lives and He can show you that He is next to you. Even in the middle of problems, in the middle of persecution, like I’m living in, He can change lives – you just have to ask Him.”

“THANK YOU FOR THEIR FAITH

A PRAYER FOR

SECRET MINISTRY WORKERS

Lord Jesus,

You challenged the authorities.

You were called rule-breaker, rebel, criminal.

Today we pray for all those who follow You,
instead of following the rules.

We particularly pray for those whose life is spent
trying to help your followers in places of risk and danger.

Lord, You know how hard they must work to disguise their actions,
and how carefully they must watch their steps.

Refresh and renew those exhausted from the need for constant vigilance.

Protect their secret meetings and give them wisdom to know whom to trust.

Thank You for their faith and perseverance,

And for the courage of those who,
despite the penalties for being caught,
still try to share Your truth and love.

Amen.

AND

PERSEVERANCE”

13

SAUDI ARABIA

0  100

80

POPULATION

35.8 million / 2.2 million Christians

LEADER

King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

Saudi Arabia is a highly conservative Islamic nation. No official churches are allowed, and it remains one of the few countries in the world where church buildings are forbidden.

Foreign Christians are severely restricted in sharing their faith and gathering for public worship. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is forbidden under Islamic law, so the small number of Saudi converts live as secret believers. But despite the risks, their numbers are slowly increasing.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organizing prayer, distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

PLEASE PRAY

- That secret believers who are isolated will find ways to connect with other believers online
- For an end to the oppressive treatment of women in Saudi Arabia
- That God will continue to build His church through the witness of courageous believers.

14

MYANMAR

0  100

80

POPULATION

55.2 million / 4.4 million Christians

LEADER

General Min Aung Hlaing

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Persecution of Christians in Myanmar has worsened since the 2021 military coup.

Government forces have attacked Christian villages and churches, killing Christian aid workers and pastors. Fighting continues, and more Christians than ever are living in camps without adequate food and healthcare, having been forced from their homes.

New believers face opposition from Buddhist, Muslim or tribes. Communities aiming to stay 'Buddhist only' sometimes even deny Christians water.

Working through local partners, Open Doors strengthens persecuted believers in Myanmar through literature distribution, discipleship programs, livelihood support and various forms of training.

PLEASE PRAY

- For reconciliation between religious groups in Myanmar
- For the protection of the thousands of vulnerable people who are now displaced due to conflict
- Thank God for persecution survival training which has brought hope and encouragement to Christians.

15

MALDIVES



0  100

77

POPULATION

541,000 / A few hundred Christians

LEADER

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

The government of the Maldives takes pride in the country being 100% Sunni Muslim.

Christian converts have to follow Jesus in the greatest secrecy. If discovered, they will be reported to Muslim leaders or the authorities, and can be stripped of their citizenship.

Everybody must wear Islamic dress and observe Ramadan, or face being harassed and arrested. In some areas, violent Islamic extremists are a threat. Even foreign Christians working in tourism are closely watched – if they worship publicly or discuss their faith with a local, they can be deported or even imprisoned.

Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers in the Maldives.

PLEASE PRAY

- For religious freedom to come to the Maldives
- For ways for believers to safely communicate and access Bible materials
- That Christians feeling isolated will know God's presence and love.

16

CHINA



0  100

77

POPULATION

1.4 billion / 96.7 million Christians

LEADER

President Xi Jinping

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Christians in China are experiencing intensifying pressure, as the Communist Party seeks to limit all threats to its power.

New restrictions on internet and social media – together with existing regulations on religion – are severely limiting Christian freedom. Believers need to be creative in how they meet, when even online messages can be monitored. Christian leaders are particularly vulnerable to persecution. Meanwhile, converts from Islam or Tibetan Buddhism can face threats and abuse for their faith.

Open Doors supports believers in China with discipleship and persecution survival training, and by providing contextualized Christian literature to believers who have converted from Islam or Buddhism.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians will be given strength, wisdom and boldness as they navigate surveillance and restrictions
- That young people will be equipped to stand strong in their faith
- That the church in China will continue to see remarkable growth, despite intensifying persecution.



These Chinese believers are sharing in a secret Bible study. Due to increasing surveillance and restrictions, many of the larger house churches have split into smaller groups.

17**MALI****POPULATION**

21.4 million / 490,000 Christians

LEADER

Interim President Assimi Goïta

PERSECUTION SCORE +6

Ten years ago, Islamic extremist groups took control of northern Mali and forced out the Christian population. The Christian community has never fully recovered, and still lives with the threat of violent attacks.

Mali has risen several places on the World Watch List this year, as an unstable government has empowered violent Islamic extremist groups. They abduct, kill and enslave people, as well as recruiting young boys. Even in safer areas, believers from Muslim backgrounds will face intense pressure from their families to give up their faith.

Open Doors works through local partners in Mali to provide persecution survival training, discipleship programs and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- That stability, law and order will return to Mali
- For Open Doors partners' work to help vulnerable Christians earn a living
- That new believers will find fellowship with other Christians and retain their hope and joy.

18**IRAQ****POPULATION**

42.2 million / 164,000 Christians

LEADER

President Abdul Latif Rashid

PERSECUTION SCORE -2

Iraqi Christians experience ongoing harassment and persecution. Last year, dozens of Christians were physically abused, abducted or driven away, with homes and businesses confiscated.

In the north, huge numbers of Christians fled from so-called Islamic State (IS). Many have yet to return as bombing goes on. Violence has decreased, but Christians are far from safe and believers who've converted from Islam risk being shunned by their communities, or prosecuted under blasphemy laws.

Open Doors local partners strengthen the church in Iraq with training, trauma care, Bibles and Christian books, livelihood projects and microloans, help to rebuild homes and churches, and crisis relief.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace and stability to come to Iraq so Christians can return home
- For an end to all violence in the country, so believers can worship safely
- For God's protection and courage for new believers from Muslim backgrounds.



SILVA'S STORY

18 IRAQ

There are areas of Iraq that are still influenced by the ideology of so-called Islamic State. As a Christian, raising your voice can be dangerous. But for Silva, working in radio is not just a job, but a calling from God.

“My work at the ‘Voice of Peace’ radio station is a chance to deliver a message,” she says. “And it is called the ‘Voice of Peace’ because the church calls for peace.”

The ‘Voice of Peace’ radio station broadcasts

from Qaraqosh in northern Iraq, and reaches up to 150,000 listeners all over Iraq and the Middle East. Silva was trained up as a reporter for the radio, thanks to the prayers and gifts of Open Doors supporters.

“I benefited a lot from this course, because I had no previous education in the field of the media,” she says. “As a reporter for the church, I’d like people to hear about and see the church and the work inside of the church and how wonderful it is. And

the amount of love that exists inside the church.”

Silva is hopeful that ‘Voice of Peace’ Radio will strengthen believers across Iraq and the Middle East. “Each Christian has a message and each Christian has a calling. And the Christian gets to discover their calling through the church and through being in the church. I count on God. And I follow this calling and fulfill it by depending 100 per cent on God.”

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS



Two policemen shut a church in Boudjima, Algeria. In recent years the government has closed at least 16 churches, while refusing to officially register any new churches. So Christians meet illegally in private homes – risking heavy fines or even a prison sentence.

19

ALGERIA



POPULATION

45.4 million / 139,000 Christians

LEADER

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

Whether from family, the community or the state, Christians in Algeria encounter many obstacles to expressing their faith.

Most believers are converts from Islam and they can face intense pressure in all areas of life to renounce their faith. Meanwhile, Christian activities are severely hindered by laws regulating non-Muslim worship, including the prohibition of anything that would 'shake the faith of a Muslim'. Several churches have been closed in the past year, whilst others have had to cease their activities.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership training, discipleship, livelihood support, Bibles and pastoral care.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the Holy Spirit will help Algerian Christians to stand firm in their faith
- That each believer will have opportunities to gather with other Christians for fellowship and discipleship
- For the reopening of closed churches and a relaxing of laws that stifle religious freedom.

20

MAURITANIA



POPULATION

4.9 million / 11,000 Christians

LEADER

President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

In Mauritania, it is illegal to leave Islam and follow another faith.

Converts face extreme pressure for bringing shame on their families; they are likely to be shunned or abused. They may be accused of apostasy in a religious court, with severe consequences, or prosecuted for 'undermining national security by insulting Islam and threatening Mauritania's sacred principles'. It is extremely risky for Christians to meet together - even foreign-born Christians worshiping publicly can be charged with trying to evangelize to Muslims.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership training, discipleship, livelihood support, Bibles and pastoral care.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the government of Mauritania would be open to religious freedom
- That the families of new believers would have open hearts and minds
- For Open Doors partners and other Christians working to support secret believers who've lost everything for Jesus.

21

UZBEKISTAN

0  100

71

POPULATION

34.4 million / 351,000 Christians

LEADER

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

Freedom of religion remains severely restricted. Although the population is 96% Muslim, the government is staunchly secular and no religious activities beyond state-run institutions are allowed.

With the exception of foreign Christians, all believers experience some form of pressure because of their faith. Pastors and lay leaders of unregistered churches in particular have been beaten and humiliated. Converts are likely to be pressured by their families to return to Islam; most choose to hide their faith.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles and Christian literature, biblical and vocational training, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection for secret believers, and that they will continue to draw close to God
- That God will soften the hearts of those who have rejected a family member for their Christian faith
- For bold faith for church leaders who are being monitored or threatened.

22

COLOMBIA

0  100

71

POPULATION

51.5 million / 49 million Christians

LEADER

President Gustavo Petro

PERSECUTION SCORE +3

Colombia is mostly Christian, but many believers face persecution from criminal gangs and indigenous communities.

Armed groups see the church as a threat, particularly when gang members become Christians or churches oppose their criminal activities. Church leaders are especially susceptible to threats, harassment and even death, whilst Christian children are often targeted for recruitment. Those who evangelize among indigenous communities, or leave their traditional belief to become a Christian, can also face strong opposition.

Open Doors strengthens the persecuted church in Colombia through Bible distribution, training, trauma care, community development projects, emergency relief aid, and education and safe houses for children.

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's strength and power for pastors facing harassment by gangs
- For Open Doors partners as they work to equip the church
- That new believers from criminal or indigenous backgrounds will inspire others with their courageous faith.

“EQUIP THEM TO PURSUE

A PRAYER FOR CHILDREN OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the inspirational faith of children around the world
who bravely follow You despite suffering.

Protect these little ones from those who want to harm them.

Draw near to them, and show them the richness of Your mercy and love.

Surround them with good friends and role models,
equip them with the resources to pursue their dreams and callings,
and strengthen them in the face of challenge and difficulty.

May they grow and become ‘strong in spirit’.

Work through them in special and significant ways
to minister Your love to people,
both in the church and beyond.

Amen.

THEIR DREAMS AND CALLINGS”

23

BURKINA FASO



71

POPULATION

22.1 million / 5.1 million Christians

LEADER

President Ibrahim Traoré

PERSECUTION SCORE +3

The expanding influence of jihadist groups in Burkina Faso is having a catastrophic impact on Christians.

Believers have been targeted and killed in villages, churches and workplaces, with thousands driven from their homes. Hundreds of churches have been forced to close, with many having been destroyed. The threat from Islamic extremist groups has spread to cities that were previously beyond their reach. Meanwhile, Christians from Muslim backgrounds face enormous pressure from families and communities to renounce their faith.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen Christians in Burkina Faso by providing persecution survival training, relief aid, and spiritual and trauma care.

PLEASE PRAY

- That God will heal and comfort all those traumatized by jihadist attacks
- For wisdom and provision for Open Doors local partners as they serve those facing persecution
- For the protection of believers and local partners.

24

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



70

POPULATION

5 million / 3.7 million Christians

LEADER

President Faustin-Archange Touadéra

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

Ongoing conflict in Central African Republic (CAR) has resulted in thousands of Christians losing their homes and livelihoods, with many living in camps for internally displaced people.

Most of the country is occupied by armed militia groups who are responsible for a range of human rights abuses. When Christian leaders have publicly denounced the violence, they've been threatened, and their churches ransacked and torched.

Those who convert from Islam can also face persecution from their family and local community.

Open Doors works through local partners to support believers in the Central African Republic with persecution survival training, economic empowerment projects and trauma care.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace and stability in the country
- For the protection of believers, particularly church leaders
- That Christians will be able to provide for their families and even reach out to their local communities.



In the Central African Republic, Open Doors partners deliver life-saving assistance to Dama (name changed) and her nine children. Her husband, and ten other local Christians, were killed in rebel attacks in June 2021.

A PRAYER FOR LEADERS OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Lord of wisdom,

Be with those who lead Your people.

Many are exhausted:
strengthen them, Lord,
direct their path,
and give them Your power.

Many are afraid:
give them courage so they can
continue to demonstrate Your love.

Many are unsure where to turn:
help them to keep their eyes on you, Lord Jesus,
to walk in your footsteps and listen to your voice.

May they serve with humility,
live with integrity,
and lead others to You.

Amen.

25

VIETNAM



0  100

70

POPULATION

99 million / 9.4 million Christians

LEADER

President Nguyen Xuan Phuc

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

The Communist government monitors Christian activity and exercises a high level of pressure on all Christians.

Believers who gather in house churches are closely monitored and face discrimination from government and society. Converts from a Buddhist or ethnic-Animist background face the most severe persecution, not only from the authorities, but also from families, friends and neighbors. They are sometimes forced to leave their villages. Yet their numbers are reported to be growing.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen persecuted believers in Vietnam by providing relief and practical aid, advocacy support, Christian resources, leadership and discipleship training, and socio-economic development projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection over women in northern provinces who are vulnerable to trafficking
- That new believers will grow in faith and boldness
- That leadership and discipleship projects will strengthen the church.

26

TURKMENISTAN



0  100

70

POPULATION

6.2 million / 66,700 Christians

LEADER

President Serdar Berdymukhamedov

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

There is no freedom of religion in Turkmenistan. Christianity is treated with suspicion.

The dictatorial government uses a huge network of police, secret services and local Muslim leaders to closely monitor all religious activities. Fines can be issued for holding illegal gatherings, possessing religious literature and even for downloading Christian songs. Christians from a Muslim background may be subjected to house arrest, forced marriage and beatings to try to force them to return to Islam.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles and Christian literature, biblical and vocational training, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

PLEASE PRAY

- For courage for church leaders under pressure from the authorities
- For healing for women who've faced domestic violence for their faith
- That Bibles and Christian literature will find their way safely to Turkmenistan's Christians.

27

CUBA

0  100

70

POPULATION

11.3 million / 6.9 million Christians

LEADER

President Miguel Díaz-Canel

PERSECUTION SCORE +4

Persecution by the Cuban authorities continues to worsen following protests against the Communist regime.

Monitoring of Christians is becoming tighter, with the state compiling a database of pastors considered 'counter-revolutionaries'. Christian leaders face harassment or even arrest. The authorities generally refuse to register new places of worship. Believers forced to meet in unregistered house churches can be heavily fined and have their church shut down.

Open Doors local partners strengthen the persecuted church in Cuba through Bible distribution, livelihood projects, biblical training, leadership development projects, care and support for children and pastors' families, and socio-economic development.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the regime would relax its surveillance
- For Open Doors partners encouraging churches that feel isolated from the world
- For wisdom and courage to Christians standing up for what's right.

28

NIGER

0  100

70

POPULATION

26 million / 65,300 Christians

LEADER

President Mohamed Bazoum

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

Most of Niger's population see being Muslim as part of Nigerien ethnicity, so converts face hostility. They may even be disowned by their families.

The increasing presence of violent Islamic extremist groups is a threat to the authorities and Christians in Niger. In some areas, believers meet in secret to avoid violent attacks. Christians face discrimination in the workplace, difficulty registering churches and are not treated equally by the law in family disputes.

Open Doors works through partners in Niger to strengthen persecuted Christians through economic empowerment programs, leadership and discipleship training, persecution survival training and pastoral care for new believers.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection against violence from extremist groups
- For economic empowerment groups in which women learn business skills
- Ask God to strengthen believers from Muslim backgrounds under pressure to deny their faith.

A PRAYER FOR REFUGEES AND THOSE IN EXILE

Lord God,

We pray Your protection for those on the run and in fear for their lives.

Your earthly family had to flee persecution, so You know what they suffer.

May the refugee and the displaced
know that You have gone before them,
and are preparing a place for them.

Strengthen and equip them as they build new lives
in unfamiliar countries and difficult conditions,
whether for a short or long time.

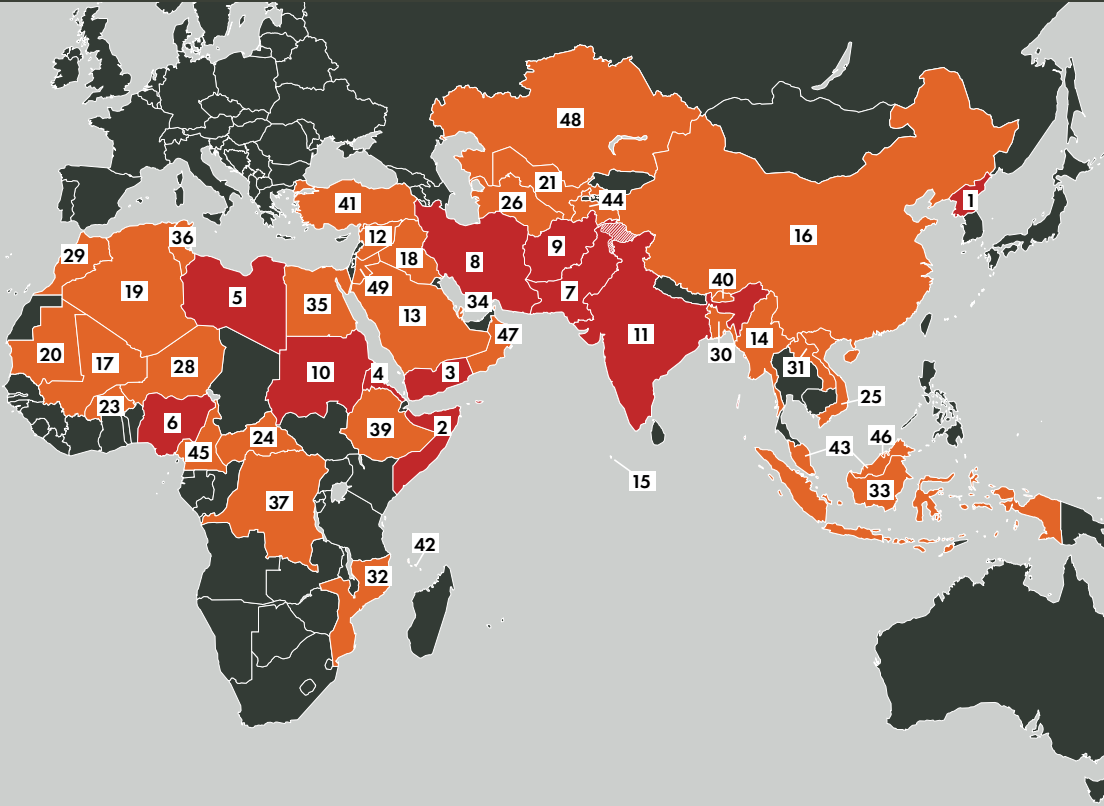
May those who have left their homeland
know their citizenship is in heaven;
and may those exiled from their family
find brothers and sisters in us.

Lift up their hearts, strengthen their steps,
bring them to a place of safety,
and may they always find their true home in You.

Amen.

WORLD WATCH LIST 2023

30 YEARS OF RESEARCH



- 1** NORTH KOREA
- 2** SOMALIA
- 3** YEMEN
- 4** ERITREA
- 5** LIBYA
- 6** NIGERIA
- 7** PAKISTAN

- 8** IRAN
- 9** AFGHANISTAN
- 10** SUDAN
- 11** INDIA
- 12** SYRIA
- 13** SAUDI ARABIA
- 14** MYANMAR

- 15** MALDIVES
- 16** CHINA
- 17** MALI
- 18** IRAQ
- 19** ALGERIA
- 20** MAURITANIA
- 21** UZBEKISTAN

- 22** COLOMBIA
- 23** BURKINA FASO
- 24** CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
- 25** VIETNAM
- 26** TURKMENISTAN



"I EAGERLY EXPECT AND HOPE THAT
 I WILL IN NO WAY BE ASHAMED, BUT
 WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT COURAGE SO
 THAT NOW AS ALWAYS CHRIST WILL
 BE EXALTED IN MY BODY, WHETHER BY
 LIFE OR BY DEATH. FOR TO ME, TO LIVE
 IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN."

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-21

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 27 CUBA | 34 QATAR | 41 TURKEY | 48 KAZAKHSTAN |
| 28 NIGER | 35 EGYPT | 42 COMOROS | 49 JORDAN |
| 29 MOROCCO | 36 TUNISIA | 43 MALAYSIA | 50 NICARAGUA |
| 30 BANGLADESH | 37 CONGO DR (DRC) | 44 TAJIKISTAN | |
| 31 LAOS | 38 MEXICO | 45 CAMEROON | |
| 32 MOZAMBIQUE | 39 ETHIOPIA | 46 BRUNEI | |
| 33 INDONESIA | 40 BHUTAN | 47 OMAN | |
- PERSECUTION LEVELS:**
■ EXTREME
■ VERY HIGH

29

MOROCCO



POPULATION

37.8 million / 31,300 Christians

LEADER

King Mohammed VI

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

In Morocco, it's a criminal offence to 'shake the faith of a Muslim'.

Christians are sometimes beaten, interrogated, arrested or fined for nothing more than carrying a Bible, or discussing Christian faith with a Muslim. Violent Islamic extremist groups operate in the region. Converts from Islam face intense pressure to renounce their faith or lose everything, even custody of their children. Christians suffer harassment online as well. It's difficult to sustain any form of Christian fellowship.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership training, discipleship, livelihood support, Bibles and pastoral care.

PLEASE PRAY

- For tolerance of all faiths in Morocco and for Christians to have the freedom to gather together
- For provision for those converts whose faith is known. Pray for jobs and support from family and friends
- For deepening of faith for Christians in Morocco, even when it is difficult to access resources.

30

BANGLADESH



POPULATION

167.9 million / 938,000 Christians

LEADER

President Abdul Hamid

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

In Bangladesh, the severest persecution is reserved for converts from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or tribal backgrounds.

Men can face false accusations and physical attack, whilst women are vulnerable to sexual, verbal and physical abuse. Meetings with other Christians are often done in secret. Churches that are engaged in outreach among Muslim communities can also face persecution. The arrest of church leaders can destabilize Christian communities and make them feel afraid to gather.

Open Doors works through local church partners to strengthen persecuted believers in Bangladesh through biblical training, Bible distribution, literacy and socio-economic development projects, and emergency relief aid.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians facing pressure for their faith will be strengthened
- That those who persecute Christians will encounter Jesus for themselves and give their lives to Him
- For healing for those traumatized by attacks.

"MAY THEY HEAR YOU

A PRAYER FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Lord Jesus,

You are the God who created women in Your image
and sees their true value.

We praise You for the brave faith of persecuted
Christian women around the world.

Draw near to those who are threatened,
locked away or abused for their choice to follow You.

Make a way for girls to receive
the education and training they need to thrive.

Bless the widows and the refugees
and provide for all their needs.

Open the eyes of our persecuted sisters
to see how precious they are in Your sight.

May they hear You calling each of them by name;
and may their courage and testimony
draw many others to You.

Amen.

CALLING EACH OF THEM BY NAME"

31

LAOS



0  100

68

POPULATION

7.5 million / 207,000 Christians

LEADER

President Thongloun Sisoulith

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

The Communist authorities of Laos consider most church meetings 'illegal gatherings'.

Registered churches are heavily monitored; any others have to operate secretly. Leaders of unregistered churches have been arrested and held for as long as a year, with huge sums charged for their release. Known Christians can easily lose their jobs. In October 2022, a pastor in central Laos was killed. People from the Buddhist-animist community who become Christians face pressure and can be expelled from their homes.

Open Doors local partners strengthen persecuted believers in Laos by providing Christian materials, leadership and discipleship training, socio-economic development programs, advocacy support and emergency relief.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians would be able to meet together without surveillance
- For an end to the unjust fines charged to release detained Christians
- That whole villages would come to know Christ through new believers.

32

MOZAMBIQUE



0  100

68

POPULATION

33 million / 18.6 million Christians

LEADER

President Filipe Nyusi

PERSECUTION SCORE +3

Christians in northern Mozambique are increasingly in danger from militant Islamic extremist groups.

The groups have killed thousands of people, and Christians face daily threats of abduction or death. Hundreds of thousands have fled and now live in camps, traumatized by the violence. Converts from other religious backgrounds also often face heavy pressure from their families. Wives risk being divorced and losing everything including custody of their children.

Open Doors partners support persecuted Christians in Mozambique through emergency aid, persecution survival and cross-cultural awareness training, and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace in Mozambique, so Christians can worship without fear
- That Open Doors partners will reach more people in need with spiritual and economic support, and for protection for staff as they travel
- Thank God for the courage of those who are offering aid.

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS



LORENA'S STORY

32 MOZAMBIQUE

Lorena* is originally from a fishing village in northern Mozambique. She is one of the thousands of Christians who have been displaced and widowed by the al-Shabaab insurgency in the north.

“We were hiding in the field, but they found us and surrounded us. They pointed guns at us but did not shoot. After that they took our husbands and began to decapitate them.”

Lorena took her family and fled. Open Doors local partners found them and supported them with practical aid, including food and clothing. Lorena will never return home to her village – but she doesn’t know how long they will be safe from al-Shabaab militants.

Thankfully, she remains rooted in Christ. “In no one else I trust, only in God and Jesus Christ. Because He did not leave me... He keeps me and

my family, because of this we are still alive.

“My relationship with God is going well. I read the Bible; I always walk with it. When Sunday comes, I go to the church because the Bible is very important. I continue to pray to God, I pray that He gives me, my children and my sisters strength and life to continue moving forward.”

*Name changed for security reasons

"THANK YOU FOR

A PRAYER FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Father God,

We pray for the parents in the persecuted church,
the mothers and fathers who need your help.

So many feel powerless and weak:
they are running on empty,
exhausted and afraid.

Fill them with Your power:
give strength to all those who have no strength left,
give hope to those who feel the situation is hopeless.

Thank you for their courage and their faith.

Thank you for the fierce love
with which they seek to keep their families together.

Lord, please protect the widows and the orphans;
comfort the mothers or fathers who have
been left to cope alone.

Show us what we can do to help.

And may they know that they are heard and held by You.

Amen.

THEIR FIERCE LOVE"

33

INDONESIA

0  100**68**

POPULATION

279 million / 34.2 million Christians

LEADER

President Joko Widodo

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

Indonesia has taken on a more conservative Islamic character in recent years, which can put pressure on Christians, especially converts.

These believers will likely experience intense pressure from their families to return to Islam. A church seen to be preaching the gospel soon runs into opposition from Islamic extremist groups, especially in rural areas. Thanks to effective anti-terror police, violence towards Christians by Islamic extremists is uncommon, but many new Christians move towns to escape harassment.

Open Doors local partners strengthen persecuted Christians in Indonesia by providing Bibles and Christian books, socio-economic empowerment projects, discipleship and persecution survival training and relief aid.

PLEASE PRAY

- For a more open and tolerant society towards Christians in Indonesia
- That God would comfort those rejected by their own families
- For the Open Doors team helping displaced Christians find new homes and jobs.

34

QATAR

0  100**68**

POPULATION

3 million / 409,000 Christians

LEADER

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani

PERSECUTION SCORE -6

Converts from Islam to Christianity face the most severe persecution, including discrimination, harassment and police monitoring. Qatari believers are few in number and keep their faith secret.

Expat Christians form the largest group of Christians in Qatar and are mostly migrant workers from Asia and Africa. They are not free to openly practice their faith; telling a Muslim about Jesus can lead to prosecution and deportation. Many migrant workers have to live and work in poor conditions, while their Christian faith adds to their vulnerability.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organizing prayer, distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

PLEASE PRAY

- For secret believers in the Arabian Peninsula, that God will strengthen their faith
- That the culture would shift to become more tolerant towards Christians in the Arabian Peninsula
- For protection for Christian migrant workers who face mistreatment at the hands of their employers.



A Christian cleans the amphitheater of the Cave Church, in Cairo. The church is in an area called Garbage City, because the Christians living in the area are *Zabbaleen* – garbage collectors. Open Doors partners help marginalized Egyptian Christians with literacy training and education.

35

EGYPT



68

POPULATION

106.2 million / 9.7 million Christians

LEADER

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

PERSECUTION SCORE -3

Egypt is a country where Christians are supposedly allowed freedom of religion, but the authorities fail to protect them from local opposition and even violence.

Christian women report being harassed and beaten for not wearing Islamic dress. In rural areas, whole Christian communities have been driven out. Converts from Islam face enormous pressure from their families to return to Islam, and cannot be legally registered as Christians. Though violence has slightly decreased, at least five Christians were killed for their faith last year.

Open Doors works through local partners in Egypt to support the church with literacy training, education support, advocacy, medical outreach, and youth, family and women's ministries.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the authorities would act to protect Christians' rights
- For God's protection and strength for converts from Islam
- That the love and courage of Egyptian Christians would draw many people to Christ.

36

TUNISIA



67

POPULATION

12 million / 22,500 Christians

LEADER

President Kais Saied

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Tunisia is 99% Muslim and Tunisian Christians, almost all of whom are from a Muslim background, are discriminated against by family and society.

In some cases, Christians are abandoned by their families and rejected by their friends. Their jobs may also be at risk. Most Christian converts cannot worship openly and choose to hide their faith since it is dangerous to share their beliefs. If they're found to be part of a Christian gathering, they risk exposure and ostracism.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership training, discipleship, livelihood support, Bibles and pastoral care.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection for believers from Muslim backgrounds in Tunisia
- That God will continue to make Himself known to the people of Tunisia
- That Christians who are abandoned by their families will find the support they need.

37

CONGO DR (DRC)



0  100

67

POPULATION

95.2 million / 90.6 million Christians

LEADER

President Félix Tshisekedi

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

Christians living in east Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are in grave danger as violent rebel groups fight for control of the region.

Prominent among these is an Islamic extremist group called the Allied Democratic Forces, which is brutally targeting Christians. This includes attacks on church leaders and kidnapping women as 'trophyies'. People who have become Christians from Muslim or indigenous backgrounds face pressure to still participate in traditional religious activities.

Open Doors works through local partners to support Christians in DRC through persecution survival training, economic empowerment projects and trauma care.

PLEASE PRAY

- For stability and justice to return to eastern DRC
- That God gives church leaders great wisdom and strength as they look after their members
- For more opportunities to help churches providing trauma counseling and emergency aid.

38

MEXICO



0  100

67

POPULATION

131.6 million / 125.7 million Christians

LEADER

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador

PERSECUTION SCORE +2

To Mexico's organized crime gangs, Christians are a threat and a target.

When Christians speak out or refuse to obey the local gang, their church is soon in the firing line. In a lawless environment, church leaders are extorted for money, threatened or assaulted, especially if they are involved in any sort of activism. Pastors and priests have been kidnapped, badly beaten or killed.

In rural areas, new believers from more traditional backgrounds also face persecution from their communities. Intolerance of Christians is increasing as Mexico becomes more secular.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted believers in Mexico with biblical training, legal support, trauma care and socio-economic aid.

PLEASE PRAY

- For a return of law and order to Mexico, where crime currently reigns
- For God's wisdom and power for Christians standing up to the criminal gangs in their areas
- For safety for those who travel a long way to access Bible training or discipleship.

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS



ADOLFINA'S STORY

38 MEXICO

When Adolfinia and her husband Imeldo became Christians, they knew that it would be dangerous to return to their hometown to tell people about Jesus – but their love for God and for their community compelled them to go.

At first, no one listened – but gradually, as they persisted, a small church of new believers began to form. But Christian worship is considered a betrayal by some indigenous communities in Mexico – like San Andrés Yaá, Adolfinia's

hometown – who highly value their ancestral traditions. So as their church grew, opposition surfaced.

Adolfinia remembers when the anger in the community against them came to a head. “They brought the people together, held an assembly and forbade us to hold services. But my husband said, ‘No, I will not give up my Christ. Do what you want – I won’t give up.’”

Pastor Imeldo was locked up and, that same night,

the church building was destroyed. Imeldo and Adolfinia eventually left San Andrés Yaá.

Sadly, Pastor Imeldo died from Covid in 2020, but Adolfinia is being cared for by Open Doors partners. “I thank the brothers and sisters who support all the Christians who are suffering,” she says.

“We are grateful. The only thing I ask is to continue praying for us.”

"EQUIP THEM TO FOLLOW

A PRAYER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Lord Jesus,

We pray for young Christians around the world who are risking it all to follow You; for those whose hopes are being crushed, and whose dreams could easily turn to dust.

We think of those denied education and jobs, those imprisoned or thrown out of their homes.

Lead them to other Christians and communities where they will be supported and cared for.

Heal young people who have suffered trauma and violence because of their faith.

Free young women from captivity and forced marriages, and protect young men who are vulnerable to attack.

Thank You for the overflowing passion of teenagers for You – equip them to follow Your call on their lives.

May they be an example for all of us through their words, their actions, their love and their faith.

Amen.

YOUR CALL ON THEIR LIVES"

39

ETHIOPIA



66

POPULATION

120.8 million / 72.4 million Christians

LEADER

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

Christianity may be the majority religion in Ethiopia, but many face persecution.

Believers from Muslim backgrounds can be threatened with death and are often forced to flee their homes. In 2022, Islamic extremists attacked more than 20 churches.

Those from traditional Ethiopian Orthodox Church backgrounds can also be completely shunned if they move to a Protestant or non-traditional denomination. Christians in tribal areas are expected to take part in tribal conflict; refusal can trigger a violent backlash.

Open Doors works through the local church to strengthen Christians in Ethiopia with leadership and persecution survival training and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- For justice for Christians being denied their basic rights
- That new Christians facing strong disapproval and persecution would know God's presence
- For Open Doors' work to disciple believers and strengthen the church.

40

BHUTAN



66

POPULATION

788,000 / 18,800 Christians

LEADER

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

All Bhutanese citizens are expected to follow Buddhism, which means anyone who converts to Christianity is exposed to hostility from their family and community.

This can include job loss and disinheritance, and even false accusations of being bribed to convert. Bhutanese culture is very communal and the protection of family is crucial, so ostracism by loved ones can have an enormous impact on a convert's life. No churches have official state recognition, meaning that gatherings for worship are technically illegal.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen persecuted Christians in Bhutan through prayer support and other practical emergency help.

PLEASE PRAY

- That those who have suffered loss for their faith will have their needs met
- That Christians will have fresh revelations of Jesus that will help sustain them in the face of hostility
- That the Holy Spirit will refresh and revitalize believers who are feeling particularly discouraged.



©Fatih Doğrul

Izmir in Turkey is the biblical Smyrna – a city with a rich Christian heritage. This was a land visited by the apostles. And yet now religious nationalism is increasing and the country's Christian past is being denied.

41

TURKEY



0  100

66

POPULATION

85.6 million / 171,000 Christians

LEADER

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Religious nationalism is very strong in Turkey. Anyone who is not a Muslim is considered disloyal and unpatriotic.

Since religious affiliation is still recorded on ID cards, it is easy to discriminate against Christian job applicants. Although conversion from Islam to Christianity is not illegal, converts are put under pressure by their families and communities to return to Islam. If their faith is discovered, they may be threatened with divorce and the loss of inheritance rights.

Open Doors raises worldwide prayer support for persecuted believers in Turkey.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Christian converts will feel loved and accepted by God, even when their own families reject them
- For the Turkish government to make policies that recognize Christians as equal to Muslims
- For opportunities for Christians in Turkey to share Jesus safely, with friends and family.

42

COMOROS



0  100

66

POPULATION

907,000 / 4,600 Christians

LEADER

President Azali Assoumani

PERSECUTION SCORE +3

In Comoros, choosing to leave Islam to follow Jesus is so risky that those who do so have little option but to keep their faith secret. It can lead to violence from extremist groups, or prosecution from the state.

It is illegal for followers of any religion except Islam to evangelize, so any Christian who shares their faith could face legal consequences. This will likely involve a fine and up to a year in prison.

Open Doors works through local partners to strength the persecuted church in East African islands through discipleship and economic empowerment projects.

PLEASE PRAY

- That all Christians forced to keep their faith secret will have access to fellowship and discipleship
- That those facing pressure and persecution for their faith will feel the Holy Spirit empowering them to stand strong
- That opportunities will emerge for Christians to boldly share their faith with others.

43

MALAYSIA



66

POPULATION

33.2 million / 3 million Christians

LEADER

King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah

PERSECUTION SCORE +3

Malaysia's constitution expects every ethnic Malay to be Muslim. A convert to Christianity is likely to experience extreme pressure from their family to return to Islam.

If the authorities find out about their faith, they can be arrested, interrogated about their Christian network - and potentially imprisoned or sentenced to death. All minority religious groups and NGOs, including established churches, are monitored by the authorities. With elections due this year, Malaysia is becoming more conservatively Islamic.

Open Doors works with local church partners in Malaysia to provide discipleship training, Bibles and Christian books and socio-economic assistance.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the legal situation for Malaysian Christians will improve after the elections
- That the authorities will stop disrupting Christian gatherings
- That Malaysian Christians will know God's love for them and reflect it strongly to others.

44

TAJIKISTAN



66

POPULATION

10 million / 64,100 Christians

LEADER

President Emomali Rahmon

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Tajikistan's totalitarian leadership treats any perceived 'deviation' from cultural norms with suspicion.

Most Christians are Russian Orthodox, and those from other denominations face significant persecution. Church services are often disrupted, and believers can be arrested for holding private prayer meetings or possessing 'illegal' religious material. Indigenous Christians from a Muslim background face huge pressure from family, friends and the local community to return to Islam, believing that a true Tajik can only be Muslim.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles and Christian literature, biblical and vocational training, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

PLEASE PRAY

- For the Tajik government to recognize the right to freedom of religion
- That church leaders who are under pressure will be equipped to lead
- That believers from Muslim backgrounds will find ways to meet to encourage one another.

“MAY THOSE WHO
DEAL IN LIES

**A PRAYER FOR
THE PERSECUTORS**

Lord God,

You told us to love our enemies and pray for our persecutors.

We pray for the persecutors:
the dictators and the religious leaders,
the bullies and the book-burners,
the prison guards and the secret police,
the extremists with their guns and their hatred,
the spies, who feign friendship and faith
in order to capture Christians.

May they meet you through the patient endurance of their captives,
and in the steadfast hope of those who face death.

May those who deal in lies learn that the only real truth is in You.

And may they seek your mercy and forgiveness, Lord.

And may we, too, learn how to forgive.

May we bless those who hurt us,
forgive one another,
and live lives of love and grace.

In your name,

Amen.

LEARN THE
TRUTH IS IN YOU”

BALDINA'S STORY

45 CAMEROON

Baldina had been a nominal Christian all her life – until the day her son was killed by Boko Haram militants. He was only 25 years old. “His name was Kamadi Cheguede,” she says. “Boko Haram attacked our village while we were at home. My son jumped the wall to escape. But they were waiting there and killed him.”

Her other son survived the attack, but ran for his life for fear of the same fate. “He fled to the city without telling me. We are very worried, we are unable to eat, our hearts are not peaceful.”

Attacks like this are becoming more and more common, especially in the far north of Cameroon where Baldina and her husband live. Islamic extremist attacks are spreading across West

Africa – but they cannot extinguish the healing hope of the gospel.

In the midst of her grief and anxiety, Baldina turned to the church. “I went to church because of my wounded heart after I lost my son. My

heart was in turmoil. Then I told myself that there, in the church, I will find peace. When I hear the message and listen to the songs, I am comforted. I thank God for everything. He is helping me to be strong today.”



BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS

45

CAMEROON



POPULATION

27.9 million / 17 million Christians

LEADER

President Paul Biya

PERSECUTION SCORE NO CHANGE

Christians in Cameroon who've converted from Islam are not free to express or share their faith, and doing so can lead to hostility from family and locals.

The influence of Islamic militants, particularly in the north, has hindered church activities. The Anglophone crisis – a civil war that's been fought since 2017 – has made church leaders who speak out against violence a target for separatist groups and the government. The country lacks good governance, adding to the vulnerability of many believers.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen persecuted Christians in Cameroon by providing emergency relief aid, trauma care, economic empowerment projects and spiritual care for new believers.

PLEASE PRAY

- That the government and security forces will be stirred to address the country's growing insecurity
- That the Holy Spirit will pour comfort into those traumatized by attacks
- That Open Doors local partners will be strengthened as they serve those affected by persecution.

46

BRUNEI



POPULATION

445,000 / 53,500 Christians

LEADER

Sultan and Prime Minister Sir
Hassanal Bolkiah

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

The growing implementation of Sharia (Islamic law) in Brunei is making life increasingly challenging for the country's tiny Christian minority. It has the goal of making the country fully Muslim, and conversion from Islam is illegal.

Protestant Christian groups can only register as secular organizations and are required to submit annual financial and operational reports to the government. All church activities are monitored and church leaders are warned against doing outreach or becoming too public. Pressure against Christians is steadily increasing.

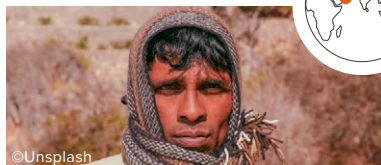
Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers in Brunei.

PLEASE PRAY

- That young Christians who are under pressure from peers will have the strength to hold onto their faith
- That church leaders will be given wisdom as they disciple believers whilst navigating restrictions
- That the authorities will have a change of heart and give greater freedom to those who choose not to follow Islam.

47

OMAN



©Unsplash



POPULATION

5.3 million / 193,000 Christians

LEADER

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

Omanis who convert to Christianity face pressure from their families and from society to renounce their faith. They may be expelled from the family home, and in some cases lose their jobs.

Disinheritance is also common and they may lose custody of their children. Expatriate Christian communities are tolerated, but they do experience surveillance and restrictions. All Christian meetings are monitored to record any political statements and if any Omanis are attending.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organizing prayer, distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Omani society becomes more accepting of Christianity
- For Open Doors partners working in the Arabian Peninsula to be equipped to serve persecuted believers
- That God would continue to reveal Himself to locals through dreams.

48

KAZAKHSTAN



©Alamy



POPULATION

19.2 million / 4.9 million Christians

LEADER

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

PERSECUTION SCORE +1

Religious freedom in Kazakhstan is restricted, and government surveillance and control continue to increase.

The Russian Orthodox Church is generally tolerated by the state with some restrictions. But believers from Muslim backgrounds can be fined, detained and imprisoned if they're caught meeting up. They also face persecution and rejection from their family and community.

It is difficult for Kazakh Christians to earn a living; they may lose their job or be asked to pay a bribe to run their business.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles and Christian literature, biblical and vocational training, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

PLEASE PRAY

- For provision for Christian families struggling to earn a living
- For protection over churches meeting in secret
- That the authorities would be impressed by Christians' integrity and grant them more freedom.

49

JORDAN



65

POPULATION

10.3 million / 170,000 Christians

LEADER

King Abdullah II

PERSECUTION SCORE -1

Jordan is tolerant of religious diversity - as long as everybody stays in their religion of birth.

Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches are and tolerated. However, non-traditional churches face persecution, as do believers who've converted from Islam and those who are active in sharing the gospel with Muslims.

New Christians have been subject to days of interrogation and beatings, while being pressured to inform on other Christians. Even those seen to be helping Muslim background believers can be intimidated and threatened.

Open Doors works with local partners in Jordan to support Christians through training, relief aid and rehabilitation projects and raising prayer support.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection on those coming to faith from Muslim backgrounds
- That Jordan's authorities would be able to stifle the growing threat of Islamic extremism
- That Christians of all backgrounds would be respected for living lives of integrity.

50

NICARAGUA



65

POPULATION

6.8 million / 6.4 million Christians

LEADER

President Daniel Ortega

PERSECUTION SCORE +8

The hostility facing Christians in Nicaragua has worsened, pushing the country into the top 50 of the World Watch List.

Since protests broke out against his dictatorial rule in 2018, President Daniel Ortega and his wife, Vice President Rosario Murillo, have forcefully sought to silence dissenting voices, especially the church given its influence in the country.

Christian schools and TV stations have been closed, as have faith-based charities, while believers have been arbitrarily detained and prosecuted.

Open Doors strengthens the persecuted church in Nicaragua by providing Christian literature, discipleship training, emergency relief aid, and education for pastors who have not completed their studies.

PLEASE PRAY

- That those affected by government hostility will be healed and strengthened to follow Jesus
- That opposition won't deter Christians from boldly sharing their faith
- That the Holy Spirit will work in the hearts of those in power, so they see the value and worth of Christians.

BLESSED ARE THE RISK-TAKERS



BROTHER ANDREW

©Renske Meinema

It all began with a risk. In 1955, Andrew Van der Bijl, a young Dutchman at a theological college in Glasgow, discovered that there was a huge Socialist congress taking place in Poland. He decided to go. So armed only with courage, faith and a suitcase full of gospel tracts, he boarded a train for Warsaw. And, as it turned out, into a whole new life.

In Communist Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, Andrew discovered a persecuted, oppressed church struggling to survive. But more than that, he discovered his life-long calling to 'strengthen what remains and is about to die' (Revelation 3:2). He

began smuggling Bibles into Poland, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia... all the countries of Communist Europe. And then, joined by others, he started seeking out and supporting persecuted Christians in China, Vietnam, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, the world... He became known as Brother Andrew, while his Bible-smuggling exploits gave him the nickname, 'God's Smuggler'.

Today, Open Doors - the organization which grew from his travels - is active in more than 70 countries around the world, serving and supporting millions of Christians who face persecution and oppression.

He once visited a Native American Apache group in the USA. They gave him an Apache name which means 'He who crosses the lines'. That was his life. It is also the calling of Open Doors. And, indeed, every Christian.

"Don't say 'take care.' Say 'take risks!'"

- BROTHER ANDREW

"If we truly want to spread the good news of Christ," Brother Andrew wrote, "we must penetrate into all the world - our neighborhoods, offices, schools, as well as regions across the globe. Not just where we are welcome or where the risk is minimal, but everywhere."

Brother Andrew died, aged 94, in September 2022.

He fought the fight. He kept the faith. He ran the race.

He crossed the line.

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Extreme persecution calls for extraordinary risk

Christians across the world face extreme violence, abuse and discrimination every day. It's only getting worse. But these persecuted believers take extraordinary risks in response, and Open Doors fieldworkers like Rebecca* risk everything to help. But for her work to continue, she needs you to stand with her.

Your gift today of \$70 could help provide spiritual and financial support to three believers fleeing extreme persecution.

Visit opendoorsus.org to make a gift today.

Thank you.

*Name changed for security reasons and image is representative



Open Doors

opendoorsus.org   

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Open Doors US is part of the global ministry of Open Doors, mobilizing prayer, support and advocacy in 22 countries and supporting Christians in the 70 countries where they face the greatest cost for their faith. If you have any questions please contact info@opendoorsus.org, or call +1-800-896-5285.