

Eyal* is a church leader in Eritrea who disciples believers under very dangerous circumstances. Since a government crackdown on the church in 2002, many church leaders have been imprisoned. Eyal spoke with Open Doors about the joys and difficulties of his calling.

"Being a church leader in Eritrea is very difficult," he says. "You always know you are the next to be arrested. Once they find you, especially if you are arrested a second time, it is very challenging – they have warned us it will be a matter of life and death."

Eyal spent time in prison after someone informed the security services about his church. "When I think about it, my body still shakes. Sometimes they put us in cells. Sometimes we were chained. Sometimes they beat us with rods. I cannot believe I survived that. Really, it was only by the grace of the Lord. We prayed, fasted and even witnessed to others. Many people accepted Jesus Christ."

Despite the risks, Eyal continues to disciple new believers. "I learn from Jesus Christ," he says. "Even though there is suffering, arrest, imprisonment, even though I may be martyred – I am ready. I want to be an example for those following me. If I don't preach the gospel, who will? This is my vision, this is what I have inside of my heart."

"No one, not even the government, can block the gospel. Today, youngsters are courageously witnessing Jesus Christ. We are so proud of them! We warn new believers that their faith might lead to suffering in prison. They tell us, 'I'm ready. I will accept Jesus Christ even (if I have) to be a martyr.'

"Thank you for your help to us. Thank you for praying, for being on our side. With the help of God and because of you, we are coming together, meeting and helping people in different ways. We thank God because He gave us you."



You can watch an interview with Eyal at www.opendoorsuk.org/eritrea

*Name changed for security reasons

Give thanks for Answered prayer

Praise God that North Korea has released three Korean-Americans, Pastor Kim Dong-chul, Tony Kim and Kim Hak-song!

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo took the three men back to the US after meeting with North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-Un, in Pyongyang. The releases came in the midst of the build-up towards talks between Kim Jong-Un and US President Donald Trump.

Pastor Kim Dong-Chul (64) ran a company in North Korea's special economic zone before his arrest on 25 October 2015. He received a 10-year prison term with hard labour in April 2016 for allegedly 'perpetrating state subversive plots and espionage against' North Korea.

Kim Hak-song had previously described himself as a missionary, and worked in agricultural development at an experimental farm run by the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST). He was detained on 6 May 2017, for engaging in unspecified 'hostile acts' against North Korea. The university denied that he was arrested because of his work there.

Tony Kim (56) also worked at PUST, and was detained on 22 April 2017. He was accused of committing 'criminal acts of hostility aimed to overturn' North Korea. No further details were published about his 'crimes', except that he had not been detained because of his work at PUST.

Thank you to everyone who prayed for the release of these men. Your prayers are powerful and effective!

PRAY

- That the three men will make a full recovery after their ordeal
- For the tens of thousands of imprisoned North Korean citizens who do not have a president to advocate for them
- That North Korea will continue to move towards greater openness to the world and freedom for all its citizens.



Donald Trump meets the released prisoners.
Twitter: @realdonaldtrump

WORLD WATCH LIST

23 MALAYSIA



Events have taken a positive turn in the case of missing pastor Raymond Koh (above), who was kidnapped in February 2017. The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia has resumed its inquiry into his disappearance, after it was halted in January when a suspect was arrested. (The suspect has since been cleared of the charges against him.) Proceedings then seemed to come to a standstill.

But in May, Malaysia voted in a new government which reopened the inquiry into Pastor Koh's disappearance. Also, a whistle-blower came forward with evidence of police complicity in the abductions.

This development has given new hope to Koh's family. His wife, Susanna Liew, says she hopes '[Raymond] will be released soon'.

Pastor Raymond was abducted in broad daylight by at least 15 masked men driving black 4x4 vehicles. Nothing has been heard from him since. Three other people also disappeared around the same time: Amri Che Mat, Pastor Joshua Hilmy and his wife Ruth Sitepu.

Malaysia has risen eight places to number 23 on the Open Doors 2018 World Watch List. Pressure on Christians is intensifying as Islamic pressure groups increase their efforts to sideline the Christian minority.

PRAY

- That the reopened inquiry will bring about the four victims' swift release
- For protection for Pastor Koh, Amri Che Mat, Pastor Hilmy and Ruth Sitepu
- That the families of those who are missing would be strengthened and refreshed by the Holy Spirit.

At the time of writing, we are running an advocacy campaign for Pastor Koh asking supporters to sign a letter to the Malaysian High Commissioner to the UK and the Malaysian Minister for Home Affairs. To take part today, go to www.opendoorsuk.org/advocacy

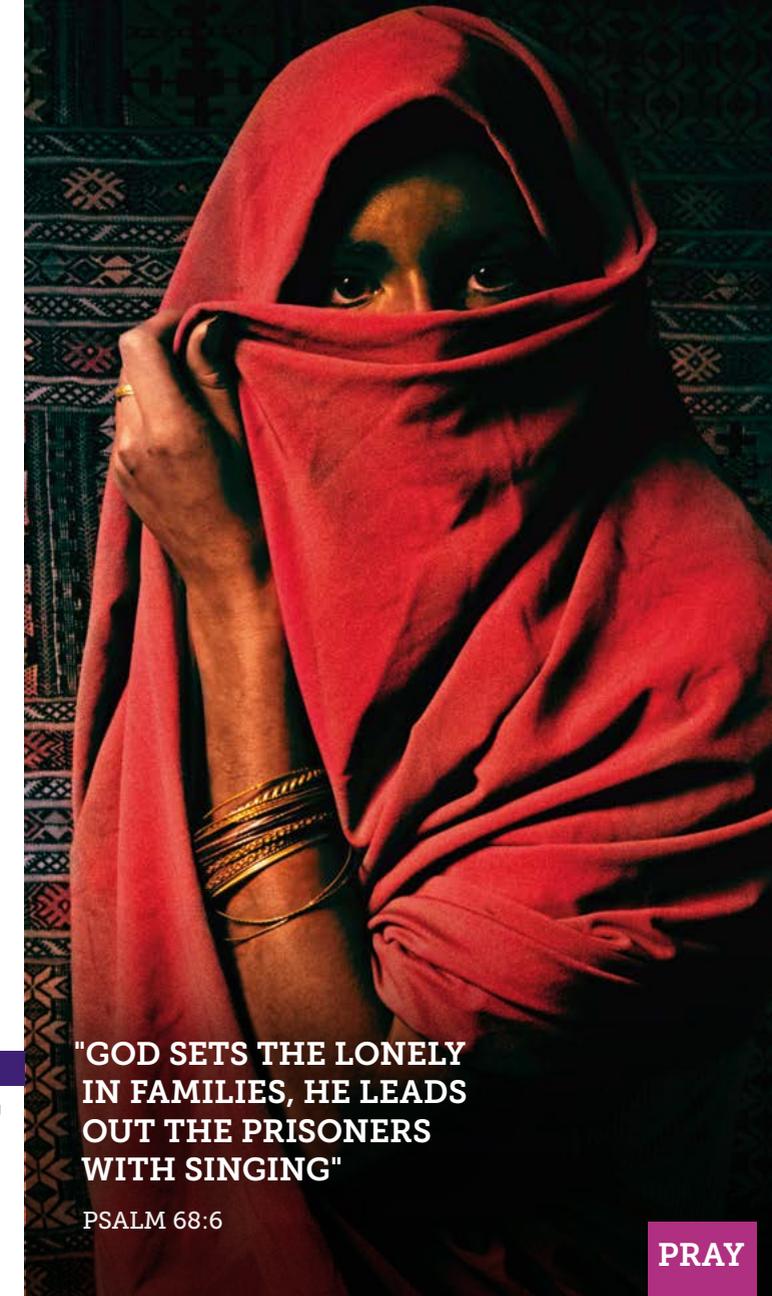


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**"GOD SETS THE LONELY
IN FAMILIES, HE LEADS
OUT THE PRISONERS
WITH SINGING"**

PSALM 68:6

Somalia



Sunday 1 July

Somalia is number 3 on the 2018 Open Doors World Watch List. Society expects all Somalis to be Muslim. Imams in mosques and madrassas state publicly that there is no room for Christianity. Ask God to build His church despite fierce opposition.

Monday 2 July – UK and Ireland

Open Doors is convening a meeting today between faith leaders and the Foreign Office to discuss the situation for Christians and other minorities in Iraq. Pray that good relationships are forged and that the discussion will shape the UK government's future involvement in the Middle East.

Tuesday 3 July

The militant Islamic group al-Shabaab targets and kills Somalis suspected of converting to Christianity. At least 23 suspected Christians were murdered last year. Pray that the militants' influence will be reduced, and pray for protection for the few believers who have courageously chosen to follow Jesus.

Wednesday 4 July

The Christian community is small and under constant attack. Open Doors estimates the number of Christians in the country to be in the hundreds. Pray that vibrant fellowships will be formed despite the dangers, and for mature and godly role-models among the believers.

Thursday 5 July

Hassan* (24) was rejected by his community for choosing to follow Jesus (see Magazine p8). Although he wants to share his faith, he fears for his life. "Please pray for Somali believers everywhere," he says. "Pray that Somali believers will stand strong in the faith and not be swept away by the big waves of persecution. The pressure on them is very intense."

Friday 6 July

When Aayan's family discovered her faith in Christ, they tried to kill her (see Magazine p9). Through a Bible study facilitated by Open Doors she found a new family in God. Pray with her that her family will come to know Christ. "God has given me a chance to share the gospel with them," she says. "I trust that the Lord will cause the message to bear fruit in time."

Saturday 7 July

Pray for more Christian workers to serve minority groups. Pray for wisdom to run sustainable community development projects that express God's love.

Sunday 8 July

Open Doors works in partnership with others to produce radio programmes in the Somali language. Ask God to use the Somali songs, poetry and preaching broadcast in the Horn of Africa to bring hope to many isolated Somali believers.

*Name changed for security reasons

Eritrea



Monday 9 July

Although the government is the main source of persecution here, Eritrean Christians have expressed deep concern over the advancement of Islamic extremism in Eritrea. Pray for grace to continue reaching out to people of other faiths and pray that many will come to faith in Jesus.

Tuesday 10 July

Thank God that the migration crisis has brought unprecedented awareness of the circumstances in the country. Pray that this will force the Eritrean government out of its unwillingness to improve the human rights situation in the country, and for wisdom for the international community as they engage with Eritrea over this matter.

Wednesday 11 July

More than 300 Christians were arrested for their faith last year. Ask the Lord to sustain them, strengthen their faith and encourage them daily through His Spirit.

Thursday 12 July

Despite increasing persecution, the church continues to grow. Many have overcome the fear of arrest. A ministry partner recently commented that this is an 'accumulated outcome of the prayers of all the saints and the global church'. Thank the Lord with us for sustaining His church in Eritrea.

Ethiopia



Friday 13 July

Islamic extremism has spilled over the border from Somalia, leaving Christians vulnerable, particularly in rural areas where they can face violence and be denied access to communal resources. Pray for God's protection and provision.

Saturday 14 July

After receiving theological training through Open Doors partners, Sube has equipped and trained over 100 evangelists and pastors to lead churches and preach the gospel (see Magazine p18). Praise God for her faithful ministry and pray that she will continue to bear much fruit for His glory (John 15:5).

Sunday 15 July

Converts from Islam to Christianity are ostracised and often denied family rights such as inheritance rights and custody of their children. Ask the Lord to comfort and sustain all who face these circumstances today.

Monday 16 July

Pray for Open Doors church partners providing training courses, livelihood support and emergency relief to help the church to stand firm under persecution. Pray for wisdom to know where best to focus their efforts.

PRAY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Tuesday 17 July – Syria

Thank God for Syria's Scout groups, which are playing a huge role in supporting teenagers during the war (see Magazine p17). George (17) came to faith through his church's scout group. "The church has been close to us teenagers," George says. "They were our pillar during these six years of war, supporting us and working non-stop to serve the youth."



Wednesday 18 July – Syria

Pray for Youth Group leaders and Sunday school leaders in Syria, as they teach children and young people more about the Bible and the love of Jesus. Pray that they will be contagious and inspiring examples of how to follow Christ.

Thursday 19 July – Syria

Open Doors partners with churches in Syria to provide relief aid to tens of thousands of displaced Christians. Pray for church leaders who have had to step out of their 'usual' work to manage relief operations and help people return to their homes. Pray for stamina as they share God's love in this very practical way.

Friday 20 July – Syria

Some Syrian refugees in surrounding countries come to faith in Jesus because they see the love of Christ through the work of the churches. Thank God for the Christians who study the Bible with them, and pray that they will grow in their faith and bring others to Jesus.

Saturday 21 July – Iraq

Thank God for deepening the faith of many Iraqi Christians. "We have seen that God never left us, even in the time that we had to flee Islamic State and when we spent several years in displacement," says one church leader. "God even provided people who wanted to support our return to our village. We still see that the churches are full."

Sunday 22 July – Iraq

Open Doors partners have provided over 200 micro-loans to help displaced people to start their own business. Praise God that so far about 80 per cent of the beneficiaries have been able to pay back the micro-loan and can now generate an income to sustain their family.

Monday 23 July – Iraq

There is an urgent need in the villages for more youth activities. "The youth need something to put their energy into, they are a little bored here," says church leader, Father Daniel. Pray that young people will find things to do and have opportunities to meet with each other.

Annual Review

Tuesday 24 July – Distributing Bibles

Give thanks that Open Doors was able to distribute over 2.5 million Bibles and Christian books last year, thanks to our supporters. Ask God to protect those travelling long distances and often taking great risks to deliver God's Word to those who desperately need it.

Wednesday 25 July – Distributing Bibles

Over 128,000 children's Bibles and 58,000 Sunday School resources were distributed last year. Pray that God's Word will equip a new generation of believers across the world to share the gospel in their communities.

Thursday 26 July – Training Leaders

Open Doors trained over 500,000 Christians through leadership, discipleship and trauma care programmes and persecution survival seminars. Pray that all who attended will pass on what they have learned so that the body of Christ is strengthened to stand firm in the face of persecution.

Friday 27 July – Training Leaders

Nearly 50,000 persecuted Christians in Asia received discipleship training last year. Pray that Open Doors will be able to reach even more believers in 2018 so that the church across Asia will be deeply rooted in the love of Christ.

Saturday 28 July – Sustaining Lives

Praise God that, with your help, Open Doors was able to support over 850,000 Christians with emergency relief, community development, education and medical care. As the needs grow, pray for wisdom for Open Doors staff to use their resources to greatest effect and ask God to multiply the impact of these programmes.

Sunday 29 July – Sustaining Lives

A staggering 638,489 people were given emergency relief aid last year. Pray for stamina and protection for those distributing food, clothes and medical care to those in need.

Monday 30 July – Advocacy

With your support, Open Doors delivered a petition of 808,172 signatures from 143 countries to the UN in December, asking for Hope for the Middle East. Pray that the petition will have a lasting impact on those in power in the UN, EU, UK and US governments, and influence policy for the benefit of the persecuted church.

Thursday 31 July – UK & Ireland

Give thanks for Henrietta Blyth, the new CEO of Open Doors UK and Ireland, who takes up her post this month. Pray for wisdom to know where best to focus her energies, and for an ever-growing passion for the Lord and for those who suffer for following Him.