

Open *Doors* magazine

60 years of serving persecuted **Christians**

March 2018



INSIDE:

- **EGYPT'S HIDDEN STORY:**
The girls who disappear
- **CAMPAIGN UPDATE**
Your support is keeping hope alive
- **STANDING STRONG 2018**
Your opportunity to meet your persecuted family



You are invited to meet your extraordinary family from North Korea, Egypt and India

STANDING STRONG

OPEN DOORS CELEBRATION 2018

SCOTLAND 10 November	IRELAND 12/13/14 November	BIRMINGHAM 17 November
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NEW!

WORLD WATCH LIST 2018 CHURCH PACK

Wake up your church to the extreme persecution facing our persecuted family using the new World Watch List Church Pack. Contains service guide, map and resources for youth and children.



Order your copy at www.opendoorsuk.org or contact Inspire on 01993 460015 or inspire@opendoorsuk.org



"I thought we were alone and forgotten"
-Karunia*, Indonesia

NOW AND FOREVER

When the time is right for you, please prayerfully consider including Open Doors in your Will

A gift in your Will today will mean a lifetime of support for your extended family who suffer for following Jesus.

Find out more about putting Open Doors in your Will at www.opendoorsuk.org/legacy





Letter from Lisa: Sunrise

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

Open Doors supplies Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services.

We also mobilise the church in the UK & Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

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

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OpenDoors
60 years of serving persecuted Christians



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Cover image: These young girls were attending a Christian youth conference in Egypt. Christian girls like them are a target for Islamic extremists.

Over 200 million Christians experience severe persecution. That's the sobering conclusion of the 2018 Open Doors World Watch List. However, recent opportunities to speak up for these brothers and sisters within the corridors of power give some cause for hope.

Together with Iraqi believers, I was privileged to present the *Hope for the Middle East* global petition to US Vice President Mike Pence at the UN and Prime Minister Theresa May in the UK. With signatures from an amazing 808,172 people around the world, Christians in Syria and Iraq are heartened to know that their calls are being heard at the highest level.

More recently, at the parliamentary launch of the World Watch List, it was encouraging to see 87 MPs and other parliamentarians absorbing the message about the scale and severity of global persecution. One of our guest speakers was Egyptian businessman Michael* who described the increasing persecution in Egypt as 'the fight of our lives'.

Violent attacks and church bombings in Egypt have become mainstream news, but there's a hidden story of violence against women, too. The kidnapping of Christian girls for forced marriage to Muslim extremists is becoming commonplace in Egypt. Such abductions have a huge impact, not only on the girls themselves, but also on their families and communities.

As the mother of two girls, the prospect of suffering in a similar way seems unthinkable. But this is the road we see Jesus

"The rising sun will come to us from heaven"

Luke 1:78

Himself walk on the way to Good Friday to 'give His life as a ransom for many' (Mark 9:45). Our persecuted brothers and sisters are, similarly, going through a Good Friday experience, but proving God's faithfulness in the midst of sacrifice. As part of the body of Christ, our calling is to support and pray with them – as many have been doing daily through our Lent resource *Live Like a North Korean* – and to let them know they are not forgotten.

Following a resurrected Lord gives the ultimate hope that a new day will dawn. The word 'Easter', which has its origins in 'east', suggests the brightness of sunrise and Zechariah's song expresses this most beautifully: 'because of the tender mercy of our God ... the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death' (Luke 1:78–79). As you can see from this magazine, thanks to all who support our brothers and sisters, the light of Christ brings a new dawn for them and those around them.

As you follow Christ this Lent, through Good Friday to Easter Sunday, may you know that your persecuted family, and the Open Doors team, are praying for you, too.

Lisa Pearce
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

WORLD WATCH NEWS

SYRIA: Open Doors training programmes strengthen over 21,000 Christian leaders

Training programmes funded by Open Doors are giving church leaders in Syria the skills and confidence to help their churches to grow, despite the ongoing conflict that has decimated the number of Christian leaders in the country.

Biblical training for church members, pastors and priests is one of the main pillars of Open Doors' work in Syria. Last year, with your support, Open Doors partners provided training for 21,589 Syrian believers.

In ten different venues across the country, 370 Christian children's workers and teachers were recently trained in interactive teaching methods.

Children's worker Danny Maida from Homs' Syriac Orthodox Church attended the three-day programme. During the war, he suddenly became

responsible for children and scouts aged 5 to 12 years. He says, "You must know, in Homs we had a crisis in the church. Because of the war, many leaders of the church left the country. All of a sudden, we lay people were the leaders of the church. So, we needed training. I didn't know how to do all this."

Throughout the war, Open Doors has continued to support biblical training for Syrian Christians in leadership, discipleship, trauma awareness and preparing Christians to face persecution. When the fighting in Homs was over, the church had two responsibilities, according to Danny: "Of course we had to rebuild the buildings, but our first responsibility was to build up the people."

Danny says, "This training changed my life and it changed the way I work with the children.

Because we participated with all denominations, I now have friends also in the other churches. We help each other and exchange ideas."

The children's group at Danny's church has grown because of this new way of working. "We had 65 children, now we have 100. The children have seen the change, they love it. They already said to me: 'You're doing things much better than you did before!'"

• PRAY

- Give thanks that, despite the dangers, Open Doors partners are able to reach and train so many believers to stand firm
- That God would continue to build His church through the courage and faith of His people.



370 children's teachers were trained last year



Mirna: "After the trainings, I trained friends in the church with what I learned."



"This training changed my life"

- Danny Maida, children's worker in Syria

UPDATE | MALAYSIA: Kidnapped Pastor's family still looking for answers

A year after the abduction of Malaysian church leader Raymond Koh, an inquiry into his kidnapping has been abruptly halted, leaving his family confused and upset.

Pastor Koh was abducted in broad daylight on 13 February last year by masked men driving black vehicles. His vehicle was also taken and has not been found.

Despite the fact that the abduction was caught on CCTV, little progress has been made. An inquiry that was set up into his disappearance has now been halted, because a man has been charged in relation to his kidnap.

The man charged is a part-time Uber driver, Lam Chang Nam. However, there are suspicions that the decision to charge him has more to do with saving the Malaysian police from embarrassment than securing justice for the family. Certainly Pastor Koh's family had no idea that a person was about to be charged and that the inquiry would be stopped.

"It is very shocking for us as a family, as we had no idea this was going to happen," said Koh's wife, Susanna Liew. "We hope that there will be justice. We still have hope in the system but I'm afraid today this hope has been

crushed."

Koh's family were incensed last year when they heard police had been investigating whether the pastor had been proselytising Muslims, instead of focusing on pursuing his captors. In 2011 Koh had been accused of proselytising Muslims, and had also received bullets in the mail.

→ PRAY

- That Pastor Koh would be returned to his family
- For the safe return of other Christians in Malaysia who have been abducted.

Source: World Watch Monitor

CHINA: Over 100 Christians sent to 're-education' camps in Xinjiang

More than 100 Christians have been sent to 're-education' camps in China's north-western Xinjiang province over the past few months. According to Open Doors sources, these 'mind-transformation centres' teach citizens to be loyal to the Communist ideology.

Most of those detained are from the Uyghur ethnic minority group and have a Muslim background. In recent years the Uyghurs have been the prime targets of the government's 'anti-terror' campaign, aimed at cracking down on both separatist groups and militant Islamists. Uyghur people who have converted to Christianity have also been caught up in the crackdown.

When you're sent to the

camps you don't know how long you'll stay. A local church member said, "Some stay there for a month, others for half a year or even longer."

The leader of a community of Christians from a Muslim background was taken to a 're-education' camp. His wife has not heard from him since. She said, "I don't know where my husband is right now, but I believe that God still uses him in prisons or camps. Sometimes I am worried that he doesn't have enough clothes to keep warm in the prison."

In February last year Xinjiang's authorities banned all Christian activities not linked to state-approved churches, in what it said were 'anti-terror' moves.

There are around 20 million Muslims in China, most of them belonging to the Hui and Uyghur

ethnic groups. Only a few thousand Christians are from a Muslim background. The majority live in the remote Xinjiang province. They experience pressure from the authorities as well as discrimination from their families and communities.

→ PRAY

- For believers being held in the re-education camps – that God will protect them and sustain their faith
- For strength for Muslim-background believers in Xinjiang province, and for Open Doors workers supporting them with biblical and discipleship training.

Source: World Watch Monitor

MOMENTUM FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS GROWS IN PARLIAMENT FOLLOWING WORLD WATCH LIST LAUNCH

You have spoken out. You have sent postcards, emails, tweets. You have urged MPs to recognise the importance of the persecuted church. And things are beginning to change.

Nearly 100 Parliamentarians gathered for the launch of this year's World Watch List in Parliament, to stand in shocked silence as they listened to powerful testimonies from representatives of the persecuted church. So many of those attending were doing so in response to the postcards, emails and tweets sent by Open Doors supporters.

"What's striking about Open Doors and the World Watch List initiative is just how much support there is for it from our constituents," said Stephen Timms MP. The last three annual World Watch List launches have each gathered around one sixth of all MPs in parliament. Indeed, one MP told how he came this year because he'd heard about the impact of last year's event.



Stephen Timms MP

Hannah*, from Pakistan, spoke of the estimated 700 Pakistani Christian women and girls abducted each year. She talked movingly of her own cousin – a promising law student – who was raped, forcibly converted and married. Michael* reported on increasing violence directed at the church in Egypt. He also held up a bundle of shredded papers as an example of what happens every day to the CVs of Egyptian Christians when they apply for jobs.

The power of these stories was evident in the response from MPs. "Heard harrowing stories of persecuted Christians," tweeted Mark Prisk MP. "We all have a duty to call out this suppression. I will be writing to Government to seek their further support."

"Heard about severe persecution of Christians in middle east countries," wrote Vince Cable MP. "All religious discrimination unacceptable. There is a basic right to worship."

Open Doors' continued

presence in Parliament – not only through the annual World Watch List launch, but also through events such as the *Hope for the Middle East* petition presentation – is having an impact on the leaders of both the UK and the US (see pp. 18-19). After years of calling on the Department for International Development (DfID) to better integrate the persecuted church in their work, DfID have just increased the number of staff working on engaging with faith communities. This should have a direct effect on their work in countries where Christians are persecuted.

The Open Doors advocacy team has also mobilised 50 MPs to ask a question about religious liberty in each of the World Watch List countries. There are also further opportunities to influence when the Commonwealth Heads of Government meet in London in April. Nine Commonwealth countries are on the World Watch List, so please continue to speak up, and to pray!



Lisa Pearce, Open Doors UK & I CEO, addressing Parliamentarians and guests

REMEMBERING BROTHER ANDREW'S WIFE

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Cornelia van der Bijl (known as Corry), the wife of Open Doors' founder Brother Andrew. She passed away on 23 January, surrounded by her family.

Corry was born in March 1931, and she and Andrew met in their youth, before marrying

in Alkmaar in June 1958. We give thanks for her life and her faithfulness in serving the Lord. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants" (Psalm 116:15).

Please pray for Brother Andrew and his family, that God would comfort them during this time of grief, and give thanks for

Corry's life, and for all the people whose lives she touched.

If you would like to read more about Corry's impact on Brother Andrew's ministry, then why not order a free copy of *God's Smuggler* - and if you've already read it, pass it on to a friend?

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org

EGYPT'S HIDDEN STORY:

The girls who
disappear



"A Muslim boy from an extremist group tells a Christian girl he loves her and wants to convert to Christianity for her. They start a romantic relationship until one day they decide to 'escape' together. What the girls don't know is that they are actually being kidnapped. Most of the time they will not marry their kidnapper but someone else."

"Every girl who is kidnapped and doesn't return feels like a daughter I am losing."

It's every parent's worst nightmare; that their child will be groomed and lured away by someone who plans to take advantage of them. In Egypt, this cruel trick is being used by Islamic extremists to deliberately target Christian girls, to bring shame

on their families and tear their communities apart.

The quote above comes from Father Simon*, a church leader who has seen too many cases like this in his small region of Egypt. "At least 15 girls a year are kidnapped in our region alone," he says. "Every girl who is kidnapped and doesn't return feels like a daughter I am losing."

There is huge shame associated with these kidnappings, which makes it hard to know exactly how many take place. A Coptic human rights activist, who would prefer to remain anonymous, says, "In 80 per cent of the cases their families prefer not to speak about it publicly. This is to avoid the shame which will make their other daughters less eligible to find a good marriage partner."

While the rising violence against Christians in Egypt often hits the headlines, with church



This photo has been used for illustrative purposes and does not depict any person mentioned in this article

PERSECUTION IN EGYPT

- There are 9.5 million Christians in Egypt. They make up about 10 per cent of the population of Egypt, and half of all Christians in the Middle East.
- Egypt is number 17 on the 2018 World Watch List, Open Doors' annual ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. Last year Egypt was number 21 on the list.
- In 2017, 128 Christians were killed in attacks targeting Christians and churches. Many of these attacks were claimed by the self-proclaimed Islamic State.
- Christians in Egypt also face daily discrimination. Christian children are often placed at the back of their classes and ignored by their teachers, and Christians can face discrimination when looking for work or seeking promotion.
- The legal system is biased against non-Muslims, and Christians are frequently treated like second class citizens.
- The biggest church denomination in Egypt is the ancient Coptic Church. Christians from this denomination were tolerated by the state and Muslim majority for a long time because of their historical presence and relatively large numbers, but in recent years they have been targeted by both their neighbours and Islamic extremist groups.

bombings by extremist groups becoming a horrifyingly regular occurrence, the story of these missing girls is often hidden. But these are the stories that we, the global family of God, need to know about, so that we can stand with our Egyptian brothers and sisters in prayer and action. For the families whose daughters have been taken, there are no quick fixes – which is why we must support them for as long as they need us.

INTERVIEW WITH A KIDNAPPER

George* was once involved in kidnapping these girls as part of an Islamic extremist group; he has since left the group, and is no longer a Muslim. He confirms that Christian girls are being targeted as a means of converting them to Islam by force. He says, “The Salafist networks began in the era of President Sadat in the seventies and reached the highest levels in the era of President Sisi at our present time.” (See the ‘Islam in Egypt’ box on p.11 for an explanation of Salafism.)

While many of the kidnapers are motivated by financial gain, as they are paid for each girl they bring in, the aim of these extremist networks is to weaken Christianity. “The networks have a big number of members and are financed by wealthy Muslims, mostly from Saudi Arabia. Sometimes they also loot or steal from Christian companies to finance their plans.”

He remembers the kidnapers using the tactics Father Simon describes. “A group of kidnapers meets and discusses the potential victims. They keep a close eye on the houses of the Christians and monitor everything that is going on. Then they weave a spider web around them.”

But the girls are not always ‘seduced’ away from their families – sometimes much more violent methods are employed, and girls are simply grabbed from the street, stuffed into cars and driven away.

George says, “I remember one case of a Coptic girl from a wealthy, well-known family. She was kidnapped by five Muslim extremist guys. They held her in a home and stripped her of her clothes and filmed her naked. One of the men also undressed in the video. They threatened that they would make the video public if the girl wouldn’t marry him.”

MIRIAM’S STORY

Miriam*, a 16-year-old Egyptian Christian, was a victim of the ‘seduction’ method of kidnapping last year. Her church leader says, “Her mother searched for her everywhere but couldn’t find her. Some people told us that she had been kidnapped by a young man named John*. He had kidnapped her



and took her to a farm he works on.”

We spoke to a researcher who has been looking into the kidnapping of girls in Egypt. He said, “Miriam was seduced by a recruit of a Salafi organisation. He was then able to convince her to run away with him. Miriam isn’t 18 yet – even if she had agreed to go with John, if we look at our law, this is clearly a case of kidnapping a minor.”

Initially, Miriam’s family received little help from the police. Miriam’s father said, “I filed a report in two police stations, and I gave the police the names of the kidnapers and the place where they hid my daughter. But the police haven’t arrested them. They didn’t even get in touch with the brother of the kidnapper, who lives in the village and is in touch with his brother, to investigate.” Meanwhile, a Muslim girl who was kidnapped for ransom in the same village around the same time was followed up with by the police and released in 24 hours.

“Kidnappers of Christian girls rarely get arrested or brought to prosecution.”

George confirms that the police sometimes collude with kidnapers. He says, “Kidnappers of Christian girls rarely get arrested or brought to prosecution. For instance, when a kidnapping is reported, the police don’t report it as a kidnapping but say the girl ‘went missing’. This way they cover up the crimes of those they see as their ‘Muslim brothers.’”

Astonishingly, George has even experienced the police playing an active role in helping the kidnapers. “The policemen help in different ways, and when they do, they might also receive a part of the financial reward the kidnapers are paid by the

Islamic extremist organisations. In some cases, the policemen provide the kidnapers with the drugs they seized during their work fighting crime. The drugs are then used by the kidnapers to weaken the resistance of the girls they are putting under pressure. I even know of cases in which police officers helped to beat up the girls to make them recite the Islamic creed."

Of course, not every policeman in Egypt is corrupt. In the case of Miriam, she was eventually found and rescued after three months, with help from the police in the local area where she was being held. Miriam's church leader says, "We found out that Miriam was held in a certain place. We went to the local police station and they really did their best to reach her and managed to arrest the kidnapper and his brother, and release Miriam. Miriam is very happy about her return to her family. We thank God for answering our prayers."

Miriam's family didn't want to share the details of what happened to her when she was in captivity – there is huge shame associated with these kidnappings. But it is clear that she was badly treated by her kidnapers. She was lucky to escape – most of the kidnapped girls are never heard from again.

Please pray for Miriam and her family as they recover from their ordeal.

PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

The kidnapers have been known to target prominent Christian girls. George confirms, "The kidnapers receive large amounts of money. And the value of the reward increases whenever the girl has a position. For example, when she is the daughter of a priest or comes from a well-known family."

But they often go after girls who are already vulnerable. Church leader Simon tells us, "They

"I teach [the girls] about their value in Christ and help them to be in relationship with Him. If they have better self-esteem they will be less vulnerable."

choose the girls who are already experiencing problems in their families. For instance, those who have an absent father. They are an easy target." This is where he believes the church can work to prevent these girls from being taken. "Girls should be able to find love at home and in the church. This makes them less vulnerable."

Melissa*, a church worker who is supported by an Open Doors partner, has been working with Christian girls for several years now. She says, "In my work I see kidnappings happening about once a month. But I believe there are many more cases that go unreported because of shame.

"We talk about kidnappings openly. We have to. Social awareness about this issue is very important. I teach the girls about boundaries in relationships, especially with Muslim men. And I teach them about their value in Christ and help them to be in relationship with Him. If they have better self-esteem they will be less vulnerable."

TAKE MY HAND

Your support is already making a huge difference to many girls in Egypt through a project called 'Take My Hand'. This project provides extra classes to support Christian children in their education.



This girl is part of the 'Take My Hand' project, supporting Christian children with extra classes



These young women are part of a youth discipleship programme

ISLAM IN EGYPT

Just under 90 per cent of the population of Egypt are Sunni Muslims.

Al-Azhar University in Cairo is considered to be the oldest and the most prestigious centre of advanced Islamic studies among Sunni Muslims and attracts students from all over the Middle East. President al-Sisi has called upon scholars at the university to fight radicalism and introduce reforms in Islamic teaching.

However, in rural and impoverished areas in particular, radical imams and less tolerant brands of Islam are growing in prominence. The government is making efforts to reverse this trend, but has not been very successful so far.

Around five million Egyptian Muslims are part of the **Salafist movement**, which believes in a return to the original ways of Islam. Not all Salafists are extremists – Salafism encompasses a huge range of beliefs, extending from non-violent religious devotion at one extreme, to Salafi Jihadism at the other. Extremist Salafi groups in Egypt have been responsible for a number of violent attacks on Coptic Christians in recent years.

PRAY FOR MUSLIMS DURING RAMADAN: 15 MAY - 14 JUNE

Every year, devout Muslims observe Ramadan, a 30-day period when they fast between sunrise and sunset and sincerely seek God. There are often reports of Muslims having visions of Jesus during this time!

Ramadan begins on 15 May this year. Join with thousands of Christians around the world in praying that more Muslims will meet Jesus this Ramadan. Order a free copy of *30 Days of Prayer for the Muslim World* by completing the response form, calling our Inspire team on **01993 460015**, or visiting **www.opendoorsuk.org**





Najwa teaches extra classes to Christian children who are often ignored by their teachers

Christian children are often sat at the back of their classes at school, and sometimes they are simply ignored by their teachers because their families follow Jesus.

Najwa teaches extra classes for 35 Christian children. She says, "Most of my pupils couldn't even read or write, so when we started the 'Take My Hand' classes, we could make a big difference in these children's lives."

"I couldn't read or write properly. But now I can!"

Muhriya is one of the children Najwa teaches. She says, "When I was in the third class, I made a lot of mistakes at dictation and I couldn't read or write properly. But now I can! And I can read English. The 'Take My Hand' teacher really taught me a lot of things."

THANK YOU!

If you gave a gift in November or December as part of our Christmas appeal for persecuted children, you were part of helping 434 children to join the 'Take My Hand' Project – thank you!

The work being done by Melissa and Najwa gives you a snapshot of the support our church family in Egypt are receiving, thanks to your prayers and generosity. Open Doors has been working through local partners and churches in Egypt since 1990, providing literacy training and education projects, youth and family ministry, advocacy support, medical outreach, ministry to widows and vocational training for women. None of this would be possible without your prayers or support.



Muhriya learned to read and write properly thanks to the 'Take My Hand' project

SHOW A CHRISTIAN GIRL IN EGYPT WHAT TRUE FRIENDSHIP LOOKS LIKE



These girls were attending a Christian youth conference in Egypt. Christian girls like them are a target for Islamic extremists

Christian girls in Egypt are being betrayed by those who are pretending to be their friends. But you can help our partners to show Christian girls what true friendship looks like, and support their families and communities today. For the families whose daughters have been taken, there are no quick fixes – which is why we must continue to support them and their communities in prayer and action.

PLEASE PRAY

Father Simon says, “I believe my God is a God of miracles. We pray for these girls in church while our tears are flowing. I pray not only for the kidnapped girls but also for their kidnappers. I pray that God touches their hearts.”

PRAY:

- For protection and wisdom for Christians girls in Egypt
- For comfort for girls who have been kidnapped, and that they would know God’s love and presence with them, whatever they are facing today
- For God to work through Open Doors partners and local churches to protect Christian girls, to teach them to be wise, and help them to know that they are loved and valued
- For God to change the hearts of those who are seeking to harm Christians in Egypt.

To help you pray for persecuted Christians in countries like Egypt on the World Watch List, sign up for Open Doors weekly email. Visit www.opendoorsuk.org

GIVE

Every £25 could give a woman vocational training, to help her start her own business and be a strong role model for girls in her community.

Every £40 could sponsor two vulnerable families to attend a family seminar, teaching them how to protect vulnerable girls and build strong families.

WAKE UP YOUR CHURCH

Let your church know about the extreme persecution being faced by our brothers and sisters around the world. Order a free *World Watch List 2018 Church Pack*, including a copy of the *World Watch List 2018 Guide*, a poster-sized World Watch List map, and resources for youth and children.



To give a gift or order a free *World Watch List 2018 Church Pack*, use the order form that came with this magazine, call our Inspire team on **01993 460015**, or visit www.opendoorsuk.org

You are invited to meet your extraordinary family from North Korea, Egypt and India

STANDING STRONG OPEN DOORS CELEBRATION 2018

SCOTLAND | IRELAND | BIRMINGHAM

Want to meet your persecuted family? We are delighted to announce that, at this year's Standing Strong event, we will be joined by persecuted Christians from North Korea, Egypt and India, who will share their stories with us. Come and worship alongside your UK church family as we learn together how God is building His church in some of the most dangerous countries to be a Christian.

North Korea is once again at number one on the annual Open Doors World Watch List, which ranks the top 50 countries where it is most dangerous for Christians to live out their faith. Christians in North Korea suffer from both the 'smash' of violent persecution, with up to 70,000 Christians currently struggling in vast labour camps, and the 'squeeze' of freedoms denied, as Christians find themselves unable to live out their faith publicly or even privately, except in the utmost secrecy. The government monitors them to the point where many Christians are afraid to even tell their children about Jesus, for fear they will let something slip to a teacher, or a neighbour.

We are very excited that our speaker from North Korea will be Hannah, whose story you may have read in our January magazine. This is a unique opportunity to hear what life is really like in North Korea, a country well-known for its secrecy; the chance to hear from North Korean Christians is very rare! Hannah's mother was a Christian, and she prayed fervently all the time. But the only words of the prayer that Hannah could ever make out were "Hananim, Hananim! Lord, Lord, please help!"

FROM HOPE TO DESPAIR

Hannah and her husband initially fled to China, where they became Christians. But they were discovered and sent back to North Korea, straight to a labour camp, where they witnessed atrocity

after atrocity. They were beaten and tortured, left to starve and placed in solitary confinement. Eventually, after much prayer, Hannah, her husband and their two children were released. Hannah says, "When we got to the [prison] office, there were two male prisoners. One I recognised as my son, but the other was in such a bad shape. I didn't recognise my husband and he didn't recognise me. That's how horrendous we looked from all the torture."

Hannah now lives in South Korea. Her husband convinced her to flee with their daughter back to China, which she did, but he died shortly afterwards. Her son is still in North Korea, and she prays for him every day.

She says, "In North Korea, my mother only taught me one prayer. But I still pray it every day, for my family and for my country: 'Hananim, Hananim! Lord, Lord, please help!'"



Hannah will be sharing with us her story of how God is at work in North Korea. If you want to be inspired and encouraged about how God grows and builds His church in the darkest places (His arm is not too short!) then book your place now. Everyone can be an advocate, so why not bring along your friends, or even your church! (Bring four friends and get 30% off your ticket price!)



“The speakers were inspiring and passionate and we left encouraged after hearing their great stories of hope.”

- attendee at *Standing Strong* 2017

BOOK TODAY FOR STANDING STRONG!

BOOK BEFORE 1 AUGUST AND SAVE £5 PER TICKET!

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org to book your place for this very special event. Spaces are limited so book today to avoid disappointment!

SCOTLAND
10 November
10am-4pm

Price
£10 (£15 after 31 July)

IRELAND
12/13/14 November
7:30pm-9:30pm

Price
£5

BIRMINGHAM
17 November
10am-4pm
Bethel Convention Centre

Price
Adult £10 (£15 after 31 July)
Children £5 (aged 5-11)*

Ticket price includes refreshments but does not include lunch. You may bring your own lunch, or purchase lunch for £5 at time of registration.

** See our website for further details*



HOW YOUR SUPPORT IS KEEPING HOPE ALIVE

Food, medicines, homes, healing, hope and encouragement – these are just some of the things that your prayers, gifts and petition signatures are providing for our church family in the Middle East. In Iraq, while the self-proclaimed Islamic State have been driven from the Nineveh Plain, our brothers and sisters who were forced to flee their homes are rebuilding their lives from scratch. In Syria, the fighting rages on in parts of the country, while in more peaceful areas the lack of resources and hugely inflated prices make it hard for normal people to survive. But Open Doors is committed to supporting our persecuted brothers and sisters for as long as they need us, and you are making a huge difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters every single day.

YOU ARE PUTTING FOOD IN HUNGRY BELLIES

Open Doors is feeding 17,000 families in Syria every month through local partners, thanks to your support. Lamis, a widow from Aleppo, is receiving food for herself and her children through an Open Doors partner. While the fighting in Aleppo may have stopped, prices have increased, making it impossible for normal families to buy everything they need. Lamis says, "We have many days when we do not have money for food. We now get food from the church. Things would have been worse for our family if we had not received the help of the church. Thank you for carrying a part of the heavy load I carry. I ask God to reward you and bless your life and the work of your love for us. The support of the church is a real support for us."



Open Doors is feeding 17,000 families in Syria every month through local partners



Open Doors supports the church that runs this medical clinic in Syria

YOU ARE PROVIDING MEDICINE FOR THE SICK

Your support provides medicines and medical care for those who need it. Antoine, a man from Aleppo, receives medicine through an Open Doors local partner. He says, "The church gives us medication for me and for my wife. This help gave us hope in life. Without this help, we would not be able to buy the medicine. We thank God for your support, especially for the elderly like us. May God bless your work."

YOU ARE CREATING JOBS THAT GIVE PEOPLE DIGNITY

Thanks to you, our local partners are creating jobs and providing loans for small businesses, helping our brothers and sisters to have the dignity of supporting their families themselves. This sewing workshop in Homs, Syria, was opened with support from Open Doors, and now provides work for 16 people.



This lady now works in the new sewing factory in Homs

YOU ARE REPAIRING HOMES

In Iraq, your support has helped our local partners to repair over 600 homes so far! George, a church leader in Qaraqosh who has co-ordinated the repairs there, says, "A lot of families want to go back, but they don't have the resources to do so." Thank you for putting resources into the hands of these 600 families - after three years of displacement, these families were able to celebrate Christmas in their own homes at the end of last year.



A home being repaired in Karamles, Iraq



Your support is providing art therapy for traumatised children

YOU ARE HELPING OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS TO GROW IN THEIR FAITH

Open Doors partners distributed 50,000 Bibles, children's Bibles and Bible study books in Iraq last year, thanks to your support.

Fadia (15) and Dani (13) are two of the teenagers who receive Biblical books. "Through these books I understand who Jesus is," says Fadia. "I know Him better now."

Dani agrees. "These books help me understand what Jesus did on earth before He was crucified," he says. "He helped the children, He healed the sick, and He made the blind see."

Sajjad*, an Open Doors partner who distributes these children's Bibles, says, "What we do with these books is sowing the seeds of the gospel in their lives. My dream is that, within 15 years, the seeds will have grown up and these children will be mature believers and have a living relationship with Christ. We will need a lot of prayer to make that happen."

YOU ARE PROVIDING COUNSELLING FOR TRAUMATISED FAMILIES

In Jordan, Open Doors partners are providing trauma care for Iraqi children whose families were forced to flee to escape the self-proclaimed Islamic State.

This often takes the form of art therapy. The child who drew this painting is part of a family of three children. Their mother was beaten so severely by Islamic State militants that she became paralysed.

"When we met these kids (ages 12, 10 and 7), none of them were able to speak. But little by little they started drawing," says Maran, the CEO of Open Doors' partner Al-Hadaf. "This painting represents their mother – one leg is painted longer than the other – next to a big heart. Unable to speak, they were able to express their huge love for their mother this way."



A teenager receives a copy of an illustrated Bible



The Hope for the Middle East encouragement app is a great source of encouragement to believers in the Middle East

YOU ARE BRINGING ENCOURAGEMENT

Thank you to everyone who has sent in messages, images and videos to be used in the *Hope for the Middle East* app – providing encouragement for believers in the Middle East straight to their phones!

One believer has said, “May the Lord bless you, I’m very happy with this app. I hope we can encourage each other in reading the gospel. May the Lord repay you for your efforts.” Another said, “Thank you for this valuable devotion. May the Lord bless you and us as well, now and forever.”

You can continue to send encouraging messages to your church family in the Middle East throughout 2018 – visit www.opendoorsuk.org/write for details of this and other writing campaigns.

YOU ARE MAKING THE VOICES OF THE PERSECUTED CHURCH HEARD

The wheels of change often turn slowly, but we are already beginning to see the impact of the *Hope for the Middle East* petition, signed by over 800,000 people in 143 countries, including 186,930 people from the UK and Ireland!

In December, Prime Minister Theresa May met with an Open Doors partner from Iraq, Father Daniel, as well as Lisa Pearce, CEO of Open Doors UK & Ireland, and Rt Hon Dame Caroline Spelman MP. One of our requests was for Theresa May to highlight Christians in the Middle East in her Christmas message – and she did!

Her Christmas message included the following: “Let us take pride in our Christian heritage and the confidence it gives us to ensure that in Britain you

can practise your faith free from question or fear. Let us remember those around the world today who have been denied those freedoms – from Christians in some parts of the Middle East to the sickening persecution of the Rohingya Muslims. And let us reaffirm our determination to stand up for the freedom of people of all religions to speak about and practise their beliefs in peace and safety.”

The Open Doors advocacy team will continue to work with the Prime Minister’s office on these issues, as well as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Department for International Development (DfID). We are currently working with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s reconciliation team on a series of meetings between Middle Eastern



Father Daniel from Iraq was able to present Prime Minister Theresa May with a Bible that was rescued from a church burned by Islamic State



Noeh from Iraq presenting the Hope for the Middle East petition to Kyoko Shiotani from the UN



Noeh from Iraq went with a team from Open Doors to meet with Mike Pence, Vice President of the USA
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religious leaders and senior FCO and DfID staff, to help address the call of the petition for religious leaders to be identified and equipped to rebuild and reconcile their communities. Please pray that the government ministers who can really make a difference to persecuted Christians will attend, and that the discussions at these meetings will allow the church leaders who come to be a voice for the people they represent in the Middle East.

Noeh, a boy from Iraq who fled his home with his family to escape Islamic State, helped to present the *Hope for the Middle East* petition to the UN in New York, along with his father, Hathem, two Iraqi church leaders, Middle East Concern and members of the Open Doors team.

A priority of the current President of the UN General Assembly is to make sure that the voices of young people around the world are heard by the UN. Noeh was able to meet with his deputy, who was really moved by Noeh's story, and asked Noeh to write a letter to the President of the UN General Assembly outlining what had happened to him, so it could be included in a conference in 2018. Because of his visit, Noeh's voice will continue to be heard by the UN this year.

The petition presentation also enabled the Open Doors advocacy team to build strong relationships with a number of senior people within the UN and various national governments. The Open Doors team met with both the UNDP and the US administration. Noeh and the team also had the opportunity to meet with Mike Pence, the Vice President of the USA. These links will ensure that the voice of the persecuted church can continue to be heard, and influence policy for the benefit of persecuted Christians.

Just a month after this meeting, it was announced that ethnic and religious minorities

in northern Iraq are set to receive assistance worth US \$55 million from the UN's international development agency (UNDP), funded by the US government. USAID, the development agency of the US government, said the money would be used to help minorities living in parts of Iraq that have been retaken from Islamic State.

This responds directly to one of the calls of the campaign for flexible funding mechanisms. Churches and faith-based organisations are on the front-line of the crisis in Iraq, providing aid and services to thousands of needy people. Yet they often struggle to access international aid, as the funding pots are too big and the processes too complicated. It needs to be more flexible so that those who really need it are able to access it.

Zoe Smith, Head of Advocacy for Open Doors UK and Ireland, says, "We welcome this announcement; ... and are encouraged by the steps we are seeing to ensure that development funds reach the frontline and communities most targeted by so-called Islamic State. We will, however, continue to advocate that the US and the UN look for flexible ways to work directly with local faith communities and leaders in their efforts to rebuild, restore, and bring stability to the region."

THANK YOU!

All of this is only possible thanks to the prayers and support of people like you. Life for our church family in the Middle East won't change overnight. But we've been supporting our church family in Syria and Iraq since before the crisis began, and we are committed to supporting them for as long as they need us. Thank you for keeping hope alive.

FUNDRAISE FOR YOUR FAMILY

Are you a runner, walker or a cyclist? Do you want to do more to support your persecuted family? Why not enjoy the hobby you love while raising money for persecuted Christians?

THE PILGRIM'S WAY - WINCHESTER TO CANTERBURY

Could you follow in the footsteps of many thousands of Christians over the centuries on a prayerful journey from Winchester to Canterbury? Could you 'walk with' your persecuted church family as you hold them in prayer along this ancient Pilgrimage route? Whether you are choosing to walk the 136 miles over two weeks or several weekends, alone or as part of a church relay, your Pilgrimage will allow you to step out of your usual routine and seek a time of prayer and reflection.

We asked Koffi Kponouglo, a trainee teacher from Stoke on Trent, to share his experiences of walking the Pilgrim's Way.

Why did you decide to walk the Pilgrim's Way for your persecuted church family?

We've all seen the pictures of the destruction so-called IS has caused in Iraq and Syria, how they have taken over and destroyed lives. Seeing so many people in need made me feel I would love to help. Then one day I received a leaflet in the post, which was suggesting ways to raise support. I thought to myself, "I'm not good at baking or running, but I can walk." So I decided to walk for them.

"I'm not good at baking or running, but I can walk. So I decided to walk for them."

How did you go about planning your Pilgrimage?

I bought a copy of the Cicerone book *The Pilgrim's Way* which I used alongside Open Doors' Pilgrimage pack and Google maps to plan my route. I completed it in six days and combined two stops per day. It was difficult because it was a whole day of walking, but at the same time it gave me time to think, pray, see the landscape and enjoy creation.

When arranging accommodation I spent one night with family, but I wanted to feel like a pilgrim on a journey so for the other stops I decided on the towns I wanted to stay in and then I contacted churches in those towns to ask if anyone had a place to stay for the night. People were so generous, feeding me dinner and giving me breakfast. These were people I didn't know at all and it was amazing to see people opening their homes to me.

How did you pray for your persecuted church family?

I used the Open Doors Prayer Diary and the cards from the Pilgrimage pack. I would pray in the morning and over lunch as I felt led, then I would pray as I was walking. I was listening to an audio version of the gospel of John and I would pray or sing as I listened.

What were the highlights of your Pilgrimage?

I was drawn even closer to God and I had a whole new perspective on caring for my Christian family across the world. After the first day of my training, I was aching all over and couldn't walk the following day. I had planned this. I had bought new shoes, I was carrying food and water with me and I knew where I was sleeping that night. But I was exhausted. It made me realise how much more people would have struggled when they hadn't had the opportunity to plan - people who had to leave in the heat of the moment, carrying children. It helped me understand the pain they were feeling. It made me even more determined to do the walk.

What would you say to someone who was thinking about taking on an Open Doors Pilgrimage?

I would say "Do it!" We are all pilgrims on this earth and it's a wonderful thing to walk and walk and walk. I would love to do it again! I truly enjoyed it!

A huge thank you to Koffi who raised an incredible £2,070.43 to help Christians suffering persecution.



IAN AND NIGEL COMPLETE THEIR CAMINO DE SANTIAGO!

Huge congratulations to Ian Brons and Nigel Turton who have raised a whopping £10,529 whilst walking 480 miles along the ancient Pilgrimage route, the Camino de Santiago. Starting in St Jean Pied de Port in France and crossing the Pyrenees in Spain 32 days later, they have been telling the story of Jesus and His suffering church and how we can stand with it along the way. They said of their trip: "We love long distance walking, but this is about so much more! We want to raise awareness and support for Christians who face persecution because of their faith."



TAKE ON AN EXTREME CHALLENGE FOR YOUR PERSECUTED FAMILY

THE KILIMANJARO CHALLENGE: OCTOBER 2018

At 5,895m (19,341ft), Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free-standing mountain in the world. Your six-day trek will take you on the Rongai route to Kilimanjaro's famous summit, with prayer and devotions along the way. Before you climb, you will have the opportunity to meet people who have suffered persecution but whose lives are being changed thanks to projects supported by Open Doors.

Fundraising: Raise £2,000 to help support trauma victims in Africa.

Costs: Trip costs are approximately £3,000 and include flights (paid by you. They can be paid in monthly instalments.) Trip extensions can also be

arranged at an additional cost for you to experience Tanzania's wealth of safari opportunities or to visit the beautiful Zanzibar islands.



JOIN THE JORDAN MUSKATHLON: OCTOBER 2018

Love to push yourself to the limits? It's not too late to join the Jordan Muskathlon trip from 6–13 October 2018. Run, trek or cycle an extreme distance to support Syrian and Iraqi refugees fleeing extreme persecution. You will also have the opportunity to meet refugees from Syria and Iraq.

Fundraising: Raise £10,000 to support Syrian and Iraqi refugees

Costs: Approximately £1800 not including flights



To find out more about any Open Doors challenge events, and to book your place, visit www.opendoorsuk.org/fundraise, contact challenge@opendoorsuk.org or ring Inspire on 01993 460015.

WORLD WATCH LIST

4 SUDAN

Population:

42 million
(2 million Christians)

Leader:

President Omar al-Bashir

Main religion:

Islam



NO ROOM FOR CHRISTIANS

President Omar is implementing a 'one religion, culture and language' policy in Sudan. The treatment of Christians there is tantamount to ethnic cleansing. During a rally in 2010 the president outlined that he is determined to form a '100 per cent Islamic constitution', where there is 'no room for Christians' and where, for non-Muslim religions, 'nothing will preserve [their] rights'.

In 2011, after South Sudan split from Sudan, daily bombings began in the Nuba Mountains, which stretch across south and central Sudan. A mostly Christian community, the Nuba people were targeted by their own government because they didn't want to live under the strict Islamic law in place across the rest of Sudan. Civilians were forced to find shelter from the aircraft however they could, amongst the rocks and in foxholes. However, since August 2016 the government of Sudan has honoured a ceasefire with the rebels who are

fighting for independence. But people there are still reeling from the effects of the bombings, which include a lack of basic services, such as medical support and education.

REVIVING PRAYER IN SUDAN

But there is hope: despite the enormous pressures they face, around 500,000 Christians have returned from South Sudan since the start of the civil war in 2013. There are still many Christian schools in the country, with many Muslim students in attendance. Father Juma Charles, of St Matthew's Cathedral in Khartoum, says that so many people from his church have returned that they've been able to open up prayer centres that have been closed since 2011.

GROWING CHURCH LEADERS

Part of the work Open Doors supports in Sudan is to assist local Bible colleges in training evangelists



People in the Nuba Mountains would scramble for any cover during the bombing raids

and missionaries. Recently in the Nuba Mountains, 18 students graduated from one of these schools in a special ceremony! After three years of hard study, these men were ready to be sent out to take the gospel into their communities.

One of the graduates, Mubarak, said, "Since I started attending the Bible College, there has been a big change in my life. I have grown spiritually and I have been trained to help others do the same. It is easy for me now to go and preach the gospel."

Another graduate, Musa, said, "I am a better person now and am able to understand the plan of God in my life. I want to say thank you to all who supported the Bible school."

Thanks to your support, Open Doors was able to provide each graduate with a gift: a bicycle, to

aid them in their ministry as they serve the people around them in the Mountains.

"I usually walk between five and six hours per day to serve our members," said one recipient. "But now I can travel much greater distances and still serve our members. I want to say thank you to all who supported us."

▶ See for yourself

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/sudan to watch a short film of the graduation.

Open Doors supports and strengthens believers in Sudan through the local church by providing literature distribution projects, theological and discipleship training, trauma care training and community development projects.



Your support has enabled Open Doors to provide graduates of the Bible college with new bicycles

PRAY

- For the Bible College graduates, that they would be effective witnesses to their community
- For Open Doors partners who support the Bible college, that their work would be fruitful
- That God would protect believers who live in the Nuba Mountains from attacks
- That Christians would be able to return to Sudan and engage in worship and prayer together.

WORLD WATCH LIST 2018 CHURCH PACK OUT NOW!

Sudan is number 4 on the Open Doors World Watch List, which ranks the countries where Christians face the severest persecution.

You can help your church explore the 50 countries where faith costs the most by ordering your free copy of the *World Watch List 2018 Church Pack* today! The pack includes a church service outline, a copy of the *World Watch List 2018 Guide*, a poster-sized map of the World Watch List, a sample bookmark, and creative resources to share with children and youth.

Fill in the magazine response form or visit www.opendoorsuk.org/resources where you can also download inspiring films to show your church.



WHEN IS A FRIEND NOT A FRIEND?

Christian girls in Egypt are regularly being groomed and lured away from their families by Islamic extremists, who force them to marry and convert to Islam.

An Egyptian church leader tells us, "They choose the girls who are already experiencing problems in their families. They are an easy target. Girls should find love at home and in the church. This makes them less vulnerable."

This is just one of the ways that Christians in Egypt are being targeted. Will you be a genuine friend to a Christian girl and her family in Egypt today?

Every £25 could help provide vocational training for a woman, to enable her to set up her own business and become self-sufficient, and be a strong role model for girls in her family and community.

Every £40 could sponsor two vulnerable families to attend a family seminar, teaching them how to protect vulnerable girls and build strong families.

Please pray and give a gift.
Use the response form, call **01993 460015** or visit **www.opendoorsuk.org**.

You can also order a *World Watch List 2018 Church Pack* to wake up your church to extreme persecution.

“Every girl who is kidnapped and doesn't return feels like a daughter I am losing.”

Church leader, Egypt

