

Freedom is an elusive dream in Eritrea, Africa's most repressive state. Only three church denominations are officially allowed to operate in the country, which has risen to number 6 on the World Watch List. Every Christian who practises their faith outside of those state-approved traditions faces arrest. Ruth's husband, a church leader, is now in prison, his church closed by the government.

Ruth says, "Even though it is a privilege to suffer for the gospel, it would be easier if we were together. To suffer alone with my children is the most difficult. I find it unbearable when the kids miss their daddy and always say 'Baba'. That is something I will never forget. It is difficult to raise children as a single mother. Every day, I worry... Are my kids able to stand this persecution? Will they endure?"

"As Christians, we expect to suffer for the gospel. But when the suffering comes, the body complains. I want my children to grow up and be able to worship God in freedom. I have dreams for them and want them to be safe. We need the peace that is to be found in the midst of all this. Please pray for us."

#### PRAY

- For the release of Ruth's husband, and other Christians held in Eritrea's prisons
- For greater religious freedom for Christians in Eritrea
- Open Doors provides practical assistance to persecuted Christians through partnerships with the local church in Eritrea. Ask God to work through these channels to bring strength and hope to believers like Ruth.

You can watch a filmed interview with Ruth on Prayer News DVD (edition 265), our bi-monthly audio resource designed to help you and your church pray for persecuted Christians worldwide. This edition also includes an interview with an Egyptian Christian whose family was targeted for persecution, and an interview with CEO Lisa Pearce on presenting the global petition to Prime Minister Theresa May and at the UN.

To sign up to receive Prayer News, phone 01993 460015, or to watch online visit [www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews)

## Give thanks for Answered prayer

Our current Letter-writing Guide features 15-year-old Abdu in the Middle East who experienced persecution when he left Islam to follow Jesus. Thank you to everyone who has responded by sending in encouraging emails, photos and videos – these have been shared with Abdu. He is still very much under pressure, but your prayers are a great help. Here, he shares how your messages are enabling him to stay strong in his faith.

Abdu has been cut off from his real family because of his faith in Christ, whom he refuses to deny. But, he says: "You, the people praying for me, feel like my new family. I really depend on you. Every time I receive new messages, I am more excited. The prayers of my family around the world encourage me to pray more and to stay strong in the Lord."

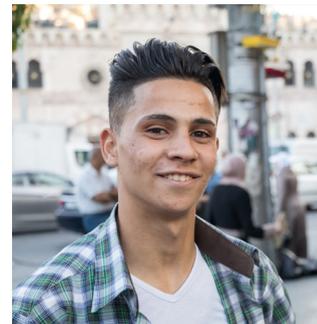


Image used for illustrative purposes

**"You, the people praying for me, feel like my new family."**

"Thank you from my heart for what you are doing for me by sending these messages. Please don't stop praying. I call on you to keep praying, not just for me but for all the Christians who are suffering in the Middle East. Please know that every time you record a video or write down an encouragement, you are making a difference in the lives of one of your brothers and sisters."

Abdu is being taken care of by faithful Christians who are not his real family. His situation has not improved; he is still lonely and isolated. Nevertheless, he is determined that God is in charge. "I may not always understand things, but God has a plan for me. Therefore I can say I am blessed."

**Please keep praying for strength and peace for Abdu. And there's still time to send him an online message of encouragement – go to [www.opendoorsuk.org/write](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/write).**

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

## WORLD WATCH LIST

17 EGYPT



A Coptic Christian shows his cross tattoo

**It's been a painful start to the year for Christians in Egypt. In January, two brothers were shot dead by a gunman as they assisted a Coptic Christian in his shop in Giza, and another Christian was killed in the town of al-Arish. He was shot by armed men on his way home – all because they noticed he had a small tattoo of a cross on his wrist.**

Egypt has risen four places on the 2018 World Watch List, to number 17. This is due to an increase in violent attacks, mostly initiated by so-called Islamic State (IS); but also a lack of government protection means the rights of Christians are frequently overlooked. This makes it hard for Christians to receive education and find employment.

But despite the increasing pressure, many Christians are determined to live out their faith, even when it means risking their lives. Bishoy Hosny, whose church was attacked by gunmen shortly before the New Year, says, "We know we are still targeted but we insist on going to our churches and celebrating our feasts. This is what must be done to confront terrorist threats."

#### PRAY

Lord Jesus, please be with those who have lost loved ones in recent attacks, and comfort them in their grief. Please provide for those Christians struggling to get education or employment, and soften the hearts of the authorities, that Christians' rights may be protected.

#### PRAY THROUGH THE WORLD WATCH LIST

To help you pray for Christians living in the 50 countries on the 2018 World Watch List, the Open Doors weekly email provides a written prayer for a different country on the World Watch List each week, plus the latest news and stories from the persecuted church. Sign up today at [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)



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prayer diary  
**Open Doors**  
60 years of serving persecuted Christians

March 2018



**"SHE IS CLOTHED WITH STRENGTH AND DIGNITY; SHE CAN LAUGH AT THE DAYS TO COME."**

Proverbs 31:25

PRAY

## Egypt



### Thursday 1 March

Growing violence against Christians has seen Egypt rise to number 17 on the Open Doors World Watch List. Last year at least 128 Christians were killed and many injured in gun or bomb attacks. Pray that the Egyptian government will do more to protect Christians and other minorities.

### Friday 2 March

Increasing numbers of young girls are being targeted by Islamic extremists for kidnapping, marriage and forced conversion to Islam (see Magazine p7-12). Pray for wisdom and protection for Christian girls and young women, and that those who have been abducted will be swiftly returned to their families.

### Saturday 3 March

Open Doors works through local church partners in Egypt to provide vocational training for women and to support vulnerable families by teaching them how to protect girls who are at risk of being targeted. Pray that more families will be reached, strengthened and protected through these programmes.



### Sunday 4 March

Dalia\* is a women's worker involved in health and social awareness projects in Upper Egypt. In this region, girls are viewed as having little or no value, even by their own families. Dalia travels to villages to present awareness and empowerment training to girls. Pray that she can bring the love of Jesus into their lives, and show them their value in Christ.

### Monday 5 March

Amir\*'s daughter was kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam by their neighbour. She lives next door to them now as a Muslim, but Amir is not allowed to talk to her. Pray for God's comfort and wisdom for Amir, and that his daughter would continue to know the love and presence of Jesus in her life.

### Tuesday 6 March

It's customary for Coptic Christians to have crosses tattooed on their wrists as a sign of their faith. In January a young man was shot dead because he had a cross-tattoo on his wrist (see over). The militants who killed him have threatened to kill more Christians with cross-tattoos. Pray for safety and peace for these believers who wear their faith so visibly.

### Wednesday 7 March

Open Doors works through local churches and partners to strengthen Christians in Egypt through literacy training, advocacy support, medical care, and youth, women's and family ministries. As the risks increase, ask God to protect these projects and use them to equip the church to stand firm.

\*Name changed for security reasons

## Women of the persecuted church

### Thursday 8 March – International Women's Day

Many Christian women are subject to the double discrimination of being targeted for both their gender and their faith. Pray for Open Doors workers serving women with literacy and vocational training, trauma care and women's empowerment projects.

### Friday 9 March – Eritrea

Remember the many women whose husbands are in prison for their faith. Ask the Lord to meet all their practical and spiritual needs so that they can provide for their families.

### Saturday 10 March – Vietnam

Women are often left to oversee house churches when their pastor husbands are imprisoned. Pray for the Priscila Programme, an Open Doors discipleship training programme for pastors' wives. Pray that the women who attend will be transformed as they learn more of God's love for them.

### Sunday 11 March – Mothering Sunday

Youssef (8) and Maryam (6) lost their mother in last year's Palm Sunday church bombing in Alexandria, Egypt. Pray for comfort for them today, and for their father Maged as he raises them alone.

### Monday 12 March – North Korea

Hwa-Young\* serves trafficked North Korean women in China with practical aid, pastoral care and Bible study, with support from Open Doors. Pray that the women she ministers to will discover the freeing love of Jesus and pray for their protection.

### Tuesday 13 March – North Korea

Haejoo\* leads a women's Bible study group in a country near the North Korean border. Despite threats against her, she regularly goes out to share the gospel with other North Korean ladies. Pray for her spiritual and physical protection.

### Wednesday 14 March – Central African Republic

Many Christian women were widowed or displaced during the uprising of the rebel Islamic group, Seleka. Open Doors is helping to establish self-help cooperatives to equip women to rebuild their church communities and provide for their families. Pray that many women will benefit from this support.

### Thursday 15 March – Nigeria

Rebecca supports women displaced by Boko Haram militants with vital relief aid and spiritual care, with support from Open Doors. Ask God to strengthen her and use her to restore spiritual and physical life to these women and their families.

### Friday 16 March – Middle East

A growing number of house church leaders in the region are women. While oppressed in society they shine in the church, bringing the light of Christ to others. Pray that Open Doors women's conferences will help them to recharge and grow.

\*Name changed for security reasons

## Sudan



### Saturday 17 March

Sudan has risen to number 4 on the 2018 World Watch List. Christians are under great pressure from the government and from Muslim extremists. Blasphemy laws are routinely used to prosecute Christians. Ask the Lord to sustain and protect the Christian community and strengthen them with His grace.

### Sunday 18 March

Since 1989, Sudan has been run by the authoritarian regime of President al-Bashir. Christians often bear the brunt of his iron-fisted rule. Despite the suffering he causes, Sudanese Christians pray for him and his government to come to know God and embrace justice and mercy. Join them in their prayers.

### Monday 19 March

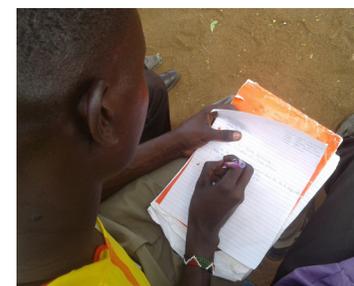
Pray that world leaders would have wisdom in their response to various human rights abuses in Sudan, including severe violations of religious freedom. Ask the God of justice to bring an end to all human rights abuses in the country.

### Tuesday 20 March

Christian ministry has become very dangerous and difficult in Sudan. Pray for protection and fruitfulness for Open Doors' local partners strengthening the church through training, Bible distribution and community development projects.

### Wednesday 21 March

Praise God for the Bible College in the Nuba Mountains, which trains evangelists to share the gospel in their communities, with the support of Open Doors (see Magazine p22). Pray that those who recently graduated would be effective in their witness to Christ.



### Thursday 22 March

Open Doors supports many Christian schools in the Nuba Mountains. Although some schools are closed due to the war, many are open. Ask God to protect these schools and the teachers and children who attend them, and pray for courage for God's people living in this dangerous area.

### Friday 23 March

Give thanks that God is building His church in Sudan. Even though leaving Islam is punishable by death, there is a community of believers from a Muslim background. Ask the Lord to continue to draw Sudanese people to the love of Jesus.

## PRAY FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

### Saturday 24 March – Iraq

The future of Christianity in Iraq remains in the balance. Praise God that the *Hope for the Middle East* petition, signed by 8,08,172 people in 143 countries, was well received by the UN and the UK government. Pray that the international community will do more to ensure the future of Christians in Iraq.

### Sunday 25 March – Iraq

Praise God that 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 (see Magazine p19). Pray that the money will indeed be used as intended - to help minorities living in parts of Iraq that have been retaken from Islamic State.

### Monday 26 March – Iraq

Through our local partners, Open Doors has started several income-generating projects, including farms, food shops and a sweet factory. Pray that these projects will enable people to earn their own living and provide for their families.

### Tuesday 27 March – Syria

Tens of thousands of Christian families are living in displacement. Some have had to move several times because the war came to the area they had fled to. Many are without work and without income. Pray for Open Doors partners and churches serving displaced families with vital relief aid.

### Wednesday 28 March – Syria

"The people are very tired and some are even in despair. Our support gives them the strength to continue," says a partner who coordinates food distribution to families in Aleppo. Praise God that Open Doors partners are helping 17,000 displaced families with relief aid, thanks to your support.

### Thursday 29 March – Syria

In some communities the church is the only 'authority' still there, and many Syrians are looking to the church for guidance. This Easter, pray for wisdom for church leaders to make the most of every opportunity to share Christ's love.

### Friday 30 March – Good Friday

"Just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows" (2 Corinthians 1:5). As we remember Christ's suffering on our behalf, pray that those who share in His sufferings today will also know His comfort.

### Saturday 31 March – Easter Saturday

As we reflect on the price Jesus paid to make us right with God, pray that more Christians in the UK and Ireland will wake up to the price many of our persecuted family pay for their witness to Him. Pray that we will be inspired by their courage to be faithful witnesses to Jesus in our own communities.