

Give thanks for Answered prayer

Your prayers and letters of support have provided a lifeline to Deborah Shettima, a Nigerian widow whose husband and son were murdered by militant Islamist groups.

"The prayers of believers around the world are the reason I am alive," said Deborah. "The encouragement cards also have ministered to me."

Boko Haram soldiers attacked Deborah's home in April 2012, shooting dead her husband and abducting her two nieces.* Three months later, another group was back, killing Deborah's son. Since then, Open Doors has been supporting Deborah with relief aid as well as encouraging supporters to pray for her and send her letters of encouragement. On a recent visit, Open Doors worker Hannah* found that Deborah is doing better.

"Our sister looked brighter than she did the previous time we visited. As always, her conversation was liberally seasoned with praise to God for His care," Hannah reported.

"God has been faithful to me," said Deborah. "To think that I have never gone to bed without something to eat is enough to cause me to thank God. I receive food aid from the church that usually lasts two weeks at a time. They do what they can, but it is difficult because they have to share what they have between the many widows in the church. But thank God, Open Doors has always been a shoulder to cry on. I recently received a bag of maize, beans and some cash, and that is what feeds us now. God has used you to bless me. I am now also helping those around me."

Deborah has been living in rented accommodation since the death of her husband and son, but is now planning to return home. Although it was the scene of such sadness, she feels ready to go back – and, she says, it will save on rent. The house holds many memories, not least because her husband built it, but Open Doors has offered to fix the leaking roof and replace the damaged trusses.

Deborah is feeling strengthened through the support of Open Doors. "I thank God for my church and most especially my pastor. He is really a good shepherd. He calls me from time to time to find out how I am doing and to pray with me," she says.



Deborah holding a photo with her nieces in it

"I am also a member of the women's fellowship and the widows' prayer wing. I have learned a lot and it has helped me spiritually very much.

"I also learned to praise God for the situation I have found myself in. At first I did not understand why I should praise God after I had lost my husband, son and daughters. But now I have come to realise that God doesn't make mistakes, and even if there are tears in the night, I will definitely have joy in the morning."

"God has given me a family in Open Doors"

"The relationship with her family is still very difficult," says Deborah. "Since I lost my husband, none of my relatives care about me, even though they know I am in need of help. But God has given me a family in Open Doors. To think that they don't know me, but still they keep checking on me, encourages me."

• PRAY

- Thank God that Deborah's depression has lifted and that she is feeling stronger now
- For success in her firewood and charcoal-selling business and for healing of an eye problem that troubles her
- Most of all, for the safe return of her nieces.

**Since originally reporting the story, we have learned that the two girls abducted were actually her nieces, the daughters of her younger brother, whom she took in after their mother left them.*

21 WORLD WATCH FOCUS EGYPT

The family of a Coptic Christian soldier who died on his first day at work say he was murdered because of his Christian faith.

Joseph Helmy (22), who had just completed his army training and was due to be married in October, reported for duty at Al-Salaam Special Forces unit at 2pm on 19 July. Six hours later, he was taken to hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Army officials claimed he died following an epileptic fit, but his family says he had no history of seizures and that his whole body was covered in bruises. A hospital report said the injuries he sustained pointed to a 'criminal' assault.



Image: worldwatchmonitor.org

Four soldiers have been arrested on suspicion of beating Helmy to death, though his family have stressed they want the men to be convicted of murder, not manslaughter, because they believe it was the soldiers' intention to kill him. On 24 July, the soldiers testified that they were acting under the instruction of their supervising officer, but he has not been charged due to a 'lack of evidence'.

A lawyer acting on behalf of the family pointed to the similarities between Joseph Helmy's death and that of Bishoy Kamel, another Copt who died in mysterious circumstances at the same unit in November 2015.

Eight Coptic Christians have been found dead in the military since August 2006.

Source: World Watch Monitor

Pray

- For God's comfort for the family of Joseph Helmy
- That justice will be done
- For protection for the Coptic Christian community in Egypt.

For the latest news and to sign up for our weekly email prayer alerts, go to www.opendoorsuk.org



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Open Doors

prayer diary

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

October 2017



"HE WILL GIVE A CROWN OF BEAUTY FOR ASHES, A JOYOUS BLESSING INSTEAD OF MOURNING, FESTIVE PRAISE INSTEAD OF DESPAIR."

Isaiah 61:3

PRAY

PRAY FOR IRAQ AND SYRIA

Sunday 1 October – Iraq

Pray for political stability in Iraq following last month's referendum on the independence of Kurdistan. Ask God to raise up leaders who will work together to provide a secure and peaceful future for the people of Iraq.

Monday 2 October – Iraq

Almost 800 Christian families lived in Karamles before IS took over in 2014. Pray for strength and wisdom for Father Thabet as he coordinates the efforts to restore houses so that families can return. "It is our mission to live here in this place as Christians, the place of the root of Christianity," he says. "Without faith I do not have a reason to stay here. But I have faith, so I am here."

Tuesday 3 October – Iraq

Pray for Open Doors partners in Iraq. They have lived and worked under extreme pressure for the past three years. Ask God to refresh and renew them, and give thanks for the hope that they have kept alive for tens of thousands of Iraqi Christian families.

Wednesday 4 October – Iraq

Open Doors is receiving encouraging reports of people coming to Christ in southern parts of Iraq. Praise God that He continues to build His kingdom and ask Him to provide good shepherds who will help these new believers to grow in their knowledge of Jesus.

Thursday 5 October – Syria

Open Doors partners are supporting 300 Christian families in Deraa, southern Syria, with monthly food supplies. But a recent upsurge in fighting between the rebels and government forces is making food deliveries almost impossible. Pray for an end to the unrest so that much-needed food can get through.

Friday 6 October – Syria

Praise God that displaced Christians are beginning to go back to their homes either from abroad or from areas inside Syria. Pray for Open Doors partners helping families to repair partially damaged homes in Damascus, Homs and Maaloula, and pray that those who return will find work so they can support their families.

Saturday 7 October – Syria

Many churches have been damaged by bombing. Open Doors partners are helping some of the churches to restore their buildings. Pray that this will encourage people to gather together again and rebuild their church communities.

It's not too late to sign and share the One Million Voices of Hope petition! Order the *Rebuild Hope* pack and help your church to get involved in rebuilding hope for Christians in Iraq and Syria. Phone 01993 460015 or go to www.opendoorsuk.org



Middle East



Sunday 8 October – Lebanon

Lebanon hosts the highest per capita concentration of refugees worldwide, mainly from Syria, Iraq and the Palestinian territories. The strain on the country's economy is enormous. Pray for compassion and endurance for the Lebanese and wisdom for their leaders.

Monday 9 October – Lebanon

Growing poverty amongst both refugees and the Lebanese means that many parents struggle to afford to send their children to school. Ask God to provide ways for children to remain in education and pray for local churches and Open Doors partners providing education for Syrian refugee children.

Tuesday 10 October – Palestinian Territories

Believers from a Muslim background experience high levels of persecution in Gaza and the West Bank. Pray for discernment for leaders who are meeting to plan programmes that will strengthen the faith of these believers.

Wednesday 11 October – Egypt

In the wake of June's deadly attack on a bus full of Christians in Minya, the authorities have imposed new security restrictions on the movement of Christian groups. Pray for wisdom for church leaders as they deal with these challenges and pray for protection of Christians as they move around the country.

Thursday 12 October – Egypt

Pray for a Christian community in Minya facing fierce opposition from their neighbours over their desire to open a new church building. At Easter local Muslims attacked a home group and burned down three Christian homes. Pray that the church will be granted an official licence to build a church.

Friday 13 October – Egypt

Pray for a 47-year-old security guard who was stabbed in the neck by a Muslim extremist at Al-Qiddisain Church in Alexandria in July. Pray for the guard's physical and emotional healing, and pray that the assailant, who was taken into custody by police, will be held to account.

Saturday 14 October – UK & Ireland

Thousands of Open Doors supporters, old and new, will be attending Open Doors' *Standing Strong* celebration events in Birmingham today and in Belfast on 21 October. Pray that supporters will be encouraged to hear what God is doing around the world, and inspired to join with us in stepping up our support for our suffering family in the coming months.

Sunday 15 October – Saudi Arabia

The government has introduced new regulations aimed at reducing the number of foreign labourers from 10 to 5 million by 2020. This means many Christian migrant workers will be sent home. Pray for them and the impact this will have on Christian witness in the region.

Africa



Monday 16 October – Eritrea

Fekadu Debessai Negassi, a Christian woman arrested in May, died in prison in August after being denied treatment for an unspecified illness. Pray for the release of her husband and eldest son, who remain in prison, and ask God to comfort her three younger children, who have gone to live with their grandmother.

Tuesday 17 October – Kenya

Al Shabaab militants attacked a village near Mpeketoni in July, and beheaded nine men. All were non-Muslims, and a number belonged to a local church. Pray for wisdom for church leaders in the area as they minister to the bereaved, and pray that the government would be able to keep the peace.

Wednesday 18 October – Kenya

Pray for the families of three Christians beheaded by suspected al-Shabaab militants in Lamu West on the Somali border on 6 September. Pray for protection for Christians in the region.

Thursday 19 October – Somalia

There are very few ministry workers in Somalia – the risks are high. Pray for courage and endurance for those working to bring the gospel to the Somali people and ask God to protect Somali believers who face severe danger for their decision to leave Islam.

Friday 20 October – Sudan

Communities in the Nuba Mountains are facing severe drought. Thanks to the gifts of supporters, Open Doors has been able to provide food and medical aid to widows and children, and mosquito nets for the rainy season to prevent malaria. Thank the Lord for the resources to help in this way and pray that this support will strengthen and encourage the church.

Saturday 21 October – Tanzania

Pastor Robert is under investigation after the conversion of a Muslim witchdoctor (Emanuel) at one of his meetings. Robert was asked by Emanuel to burn his witchdoctor paraphernalia but police then accused him of burning the Quran. Pray that the charges will be dropped, and that Emanuel will grow in faith.

Sunday 22 October – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Christians in the North Kivu area of DRC face continued violent attacks by the Islamic militant Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Many people have been displaced and deeply traumatised, and churches feel ill-equipped to help. Pray for Open Doors workers assisting local churches with emergency relief, trauma care and training in how to view persecution biblically.

Monday 23 October – Cameroon

Abdias* (22) comes from a distinguished Muslim family. Since coming to Christ last year, his family have put him under great pressure to recant. He is now in hiding. Pray for his protection and that he will continue to grow strong in his faith in Jesus.

*Name changed for security reasons

East Asia



Tuesday 24 October – North Korea

Give thanks that Korean-Canadian pastor Hyeon Soo Lim has been released after two and a half years in a labour camp. Pray for his full recovery, and pray for the release of three Korean-Americans still detained in North Korea - Tony Kim, Kim Hak-song and Kim Dong Chul.

Wednesday 25 October – North Korea

Remember the tens of thousands of North Korean Christians being held in labour camps. Ask God to sustain them with His mighty power so that they have great endurance and patience, and pray that they will know the joy of their inheritance in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:11-12).

Thursday 26 October – China

Pray for Matthew*, a Han Chinese pastor serving believers from a Muslim background in remote areas of China. While visiting isolated believers he fell from a mountain, severely injuring his leg. Pray for his recovery and ask God to strengthen his faith so that he can continue his ministry.

Friday 27 October – China

Pray for a team translating the New Testament for Buddhist-background believers from minority groups. Pray for clear communications skills, and for protection for their families – they often are under spiritual attack.

Saturday 28 October – China

Pray for the recording of the New Testament into three different dialects. The translation team are struggling to make progress on the recording of one particular dialect; pray for a breakthrough.

Sunday 29 October – Myanmar

Pray for Rohingya Muslims and Christian converts fleeing fierce violence in Rakhine State. Pray that food and other provisions would reach them, despite the travel restrictions imposed by the Burmese government.

Monday 30 October – Laos

Two sisters, aged 16 and 17, and several other Christian believers were imprisoned for refusing to recant their faith in Jesus. After they were released, their families refused to allow them to return home. Give thanks that a local church has given them temporary shelter and aid. Pray that they will be strengthened by the love of their Christian family.

Tuesday 31 October – Vietnam

Pastor Nguyen Cong Chinh was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2011 for 'undermining the solidarity of the country'. "He did not commit any crime. As a pastor, he only fought for the free religious practice of Christians from ethnic minority groups in the central highlands," says his wife. Ask the Lord to strengthen him to stand firm, and pray for his release.