



OpenDoors

magazine

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

July 2017

INSIDE:

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Singled out but not alone

• INDONESIA'S SECRET CHILDREN

The long journey to healing

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Letter from Lisa: Rapid

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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Cover Image This young believer from India received discipleship training thanks to your support.

Last month I got back from India. Things are changing rapidly there – culturally, economically, and spiritually – but what struck me most is the increasing sense of danger for Christians.

There is a palpable tension in the atmosphere and the conversations. The Open Doors *World Watch List* reveals that Hindu extremism is on the increase in India and is having a devastating impact on the church. Indeed, 248 violent attacks on believers were recorded in the first three months of this year alone. But there is also a rising sense of freedoms being curtailed, too. It is more dangerous to travel, to be at home while your husband is travelling, to send emails, to be at school, as can be seen from the real-life stories of believers on pp.7-12.

Thankfully, through Open Doors' partners in India, there is a courageous network of 'Rapid Response' teams. These brave volunteers go to the areas where Christians have been attacked, get them to hospital, care for their needs – all under the hostile eyes of the persecutors. I had the chance to meet these amazing volunteers who said they had a request for me. What do you suppose it was? What might your request be in their shoes? They wanted me to tell them *how they could pray for Christians in the UK and Ireland*. Yes, really! I was speechless. Yet the shocking terrorist attacks that have rocked our nation in recent weeks show how much we need their prayers.

Something extraordinary is going on in India – and our family are living out New Testament faith. I met one woman who had been

"...brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured"

2 Thessalonians 3:1

miraculously healed, causing 22 of her family to come to Christ! And there are many more stories like that, so come and be inspired for yourself in October when one of our key partners from India will be speaking at Open Doors Celebration *Standing Strong*. Nevertheless, there is an urgent need for a rapid response here, too – to pray, provide and speak up for our brothers and sisters while there is still the opportunity to provide direct encouragement and provision – because without God's intervention this window will not be open for long.

It is vital that Christians here keep religious freedom on the agenda of those who can influence policy and with a newly elected government this is a great time to speak up. If you haven't already, please send the postcard you received in your June mailing to your new MP, urging them to ensure that real change happens for Christians in Syria and Iraq. Your support makes a real difference and really strengthens the ties that bind us together as a family. Although our brothers and sisters are hard-pressed and many are afraid, they are also full of love, resilience, prayer, persistence and enduring hope – and they are praying for you!

Lisa

Lisa Pearce
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

WORLD WATCH NEWS

PHILIPPINES: Christians killed, hostages taken

Militants linked to Islamic State (IS) have killed nine Christians in Marawi City, Philippines. A further 16 Christians are among a number of people taken hostage.

Militants from the extremist Maute Group attacked the city after government forces attempted to capture a prominent IS leader. The Christians were attempting to cross a checkpoint when they were forced out of the truck and executed.

One of the hostages – Father Teresito Suganob – appeared in a video released by the group. Reportedly, they are being forced

to recite Muslim prayers, and used as human shields.

A few days after the attack, IS released a video of their members burning a Catholic Church in the city, after destroying the church interior and tearing down a cross.

Unsurprisingly, many Christians are among the thousands of people who have fled. An Open Doors worker told us that 23 families of believers have been rescued from Marawi by Open Doors partners. “This is the first time they’ve experienced an armed conflict where they needed to evacuate... What they need now is clothing, underwear, toiletries,

blankets, and sleeping mats.”

There have also been acts of solidarity. An Open Doors reporter told us that “Muslim residents have reportedly been giving Christians hijabs, hiding them in their homes, and teaching them Muslim prayers.”

Although the Philippines is a majority-Christian country, rising militant Islamism is a growing cause for concern.

• PRAY

- For protection over the civilians and freedom for the hostages.
- That extremist views in the Philippines will not gain ground.

SUDAN: Prisoners released

We are delighted to report that Hassan Kodi and Abdulmonem Abdumawla were released from prison on 11 May after a presidential pardon.

They were arrested in December 2015 with Kuwa Shamal and Petr Jasek, a Czech national. All four were charged with ‘espionage’, ‘inciting strife between communities’ and several other offences.

On 29 January 2017 Hassan and Abdulmonem were each sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for abetting Petr in the crime of espionage, and to one year’s imprisonment each for inciting strife between communities and spreading rumours undermining the authority of the state (although the legal maximum penalty for this last crime is six months). Since that date they had been serving their sentences in prison while their lawyers appealed against the verdict.

Kuwa was acquitted on 2 January 2017, and Petr received a presidential pardon and left Sudan on 26 February.

Thank you to everyone who has prayed for and taken action on behalf of these men.

Source: MEC

• PRAY

- For healing for these men as they recover from their time in prison
- For protection for Christians in Sudan.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Petr Jasek, Hassan Kodi, Kuwa Shamal, Abdulmonem Abdumawla



"God is good! I am so grateful to the Lord. Please tell all those who prayed for me that I am out of prison."

Hassan Kodi, Sudan

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS PRAY FOR MANCHESTER

In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Manchester, Open Doors received messages of support from persecuted Christians around the world. These are people who know only too well what it is to experience trauma and violence.

A Pakistani sister who helped victims of terror attacks in her country, shares: “I was a student in Manchester for three years. There, God called me to serve His church... Today, we assure you that in your pain and grief and shock, we are standing by you and

trusting Jesus, Emmanuel, to walk with you and comfort you and wipe your tears. We journey together.”

A pastor from Bangladesh said: “I am shocked to hear this news. I’m praying for the affected people and their families; may God pour His love and blessing over them.”

A church worker in Malaysia expressed his sadness: “I pray that this tragedy will help open our eyes to see the great need to share the truth of Jesus to all; for only His love can help them lay down their bombs.”

In Vietnam, five Christian



Secret church leaders in Vietnam praying for Manchester

groups even took time to pray for Manchester. “We ask God to forgive [the attacker] and to comfort the people in Manchester and the UK.”

IRAQ: Muslims help repair monastery in Mosul

Young Muslim volunteers from Al Arabi neighbourhood in the Iraqi city of Mosul have been helping to clean and repair Mar Georges monastery, according to the group ‘This is Christian Iraq’.

The group says that the young Muslims decided to help to show that ‘Mosul is yours as it’s ours’ and ‘our differences are our strength’.

At the time of writing, parts of Mosul have been liberated from the self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS), and the final recapturing of the city is reported to be imminent.

• PRAY

- Thank God that Muslims and Christians are working together in this part of Mosul
- That this would be a model of reconciliation for other communities
- For provision and protection for Iraqi Christians as they begin to return to towns and villages liberated from IS.



Photos: Facebook/This is Christian Iraq/ Mohammed Al-Zakaria

EGYPT: Coptic Christians shot on bus

At least 29 Christians were killed and 24 injured as they travelled to Ascension Day services at the Monastery of St. Samuel, Minya, in southern Egypt.

Three vehicles carrying Christians were stopped by militants armed with machine guns. Azra Fakhry, Vicar of the Maghagha and El-Idwa Archdiocese, said that the

Christians were ordered to convert to Islam. However, the Christians refused, saying, “We are Christians.” At this point, the attackers opened fire, shooting first the men and then a number of women and children.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but witnesses described seeing flags of the self-proclaimed Islamic State

(IS) displayed on the attackers’ vehicles. IS has since claimed responsibility.

• PRAY

- For comfort for the bereaved and healing for the injured
- For protection for Christians in Egypt.



HOPE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Bringing hope to the Middle East – Amplify the voice of the persecuted church

For six weeks after the General Election was announced, our airwaves were filled with debates over national security, Brexit and social care. But thanks to Open Doors supporters, the persecuted church was also placed high on the agenda.

Over 1,300 supporters contacted their election candidates and attended hustings, making candidates aware of the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign and petition, and asking crucial questions about the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Since the election, Open Doors supporters have met with their newly elected MPs, and sent postcards congratulating them on their election and urging them to ensure that real change happens for Christians in Syria and Iraq through the petition's calls. Open Doors' advocacy team will also be following up with MPs who agreed

to champion the persecuted church over the coming weeks. If you heard back from your MP, why not also get in touch to remind them of their commitment?

One new MP responded to an Open Doors supporter, pledging her support, and saying: "I completely agree that persecuted Christians the world over, who have been denied a voice, need a champion and that the current situation in the Middle East makes this even more pressing. I would be very happy to join the All Party Parliamentary Group on International freedom of Religion or Belief and participate in any debates on this."

Many of those who heard about the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign also committed to promote its calls in Parliament if elected – showing that a simple action really can make a difference.

Keep sharing the petition

The One Million Voices of Hope petition has reached a crucial milestone: over 280,000 people from 116 countries have added their voice. That's over a quarter of the way! By signing and sharing the petition with friends and family, you are enabling the momentum to build every day. We have produced a *Rebuild Hope* campaign pack to help you share the petition with your church – turn to p.17 to find out more. The more people who sign it, the greater impact the petition will have when it is presented to world leaders and the UN Secretary General this December. Continue to share the petition today!

Your faithful support for our church family in the Middle East is helping to rebuild the Christian community, life by life, brick by brick, job by job.

Since January 2016, you have given an incredible £3.2 million to support our brothers and sisters in Syria and Iraq, helping to provide vital aid for tens of thousands of families every month – thank you so much!

Your committed actions are at their best when they are drenched in prayer. Please continue to pray:

- That the newly elected MPs will take up the cause of the persecuted church
- For the petition to continue to go from strength to strength as new people sign and share it, both here in the UK and Ireland, and all over the world.

Through prayer, action and giving, you can bring real hope to the Middle East.

#HOPE4ME #SAVE ME



SINGLED OUT, BUT NOT ALONE

"The villagers crowded around us and started punching and kicking us, all over our bodies. They asked us to praise Hindu gods and goddesses. We refused. They kicked us harder."

This is what happened to Sohan*, pictured left, after he decided to follow Jesus and began sharing the gospel with others. His story isn't unusual. Last year over 800 Christians were physically attacked, and this year that number is likely to be even higher. The rise of Hindu extremism means Christians are facing increasing levels of discrimination and attack.

But God is at work. Many are coming to faith after experiencing miraculous healings, and imprisoned believers have seen God use them to reach their fellow prisoners with the gospel. Your prayers and support are making an incredible difference to our brothers and sisters – Sohan says, "You have strengthened the persecuted people and show you are standing with them."

PREACHING IN PRISON

After Sohan was beaten, his attackers called the police and accused him of converting people to Christianity; there are anti-conversion laws in five of India's states, and they are frequently

LEFT: Sohan was imprisoned for sharing the gospel

*Name changed for security reasons

abused in order to harass and arrest minorities, including Christians. "I was shivering with fear, but I was praying," says Sohan.

He was imprisoned for four days, but he saw God work in amazing ways. Sohan says, "I preached the gospel and prayed for an inmate who was sick. He was healed and believed in Christ instantly. My other cell mate was a person suffering from intense depression. He kept saying that he wanted to kill himself. I prayed for him and the suicidal thoughts left him. He also accepted Christ."

"The third person I met was a young man falsely accused of raping a woman. He also used to remain very upset and felt hopeless about his life. I shared the gospel with him, and he also accepted Christ inside the prison. This way I saw God's immense power and deliverance."

Thanks to your support and prayers, Open Doors partners were able to help bail Sohan out of prison, and are helping him to fight the false claims filed against him. He has returned to his village, and lives among the people who beat him so brutally and had him arrested.

"I saw God's immense power and deliverance"

Despite everything he has been through, he is determined to continue following Jesus. "I suffered with many physical ailments and financial troubles before I became a Christian. Now I have freedom from all those problems and have a new



Mohan's family have faced repeated attacks

life. This new life I will live only for Him, even if it includes persecution," he says. "I give thanks to your organisation for your help."

'WE NEVER ANTICIPATED RESISTANCE'

It is the healing power of God that is drawing many to faith in Jesus in India. This was the case for Mohan*, pictured above, after his father became sick. He says, "We did everything we could to appease the gods. We sacrificed hens, goats and pigs. We prayed to the gods, but we all felt miserable."

"One of the villagers had become a Christian and he told us we should stop worshipping the idols and our ancestors. We should pray to

Jesus instead. When we did, my father was healed. There was no more sickness in my family. Of course, we followed Jesus after that. To be honest, we never anticipated resistance."

But resistance did come. Mohan says, "The villagers saw we were happy and healthy. They asked what was happening. We explained that we now followed Jesus. They did not like this and asked us to leave the village."

Mohan's family didn't leave, and in the ten years since they came to faith, they have faced repeated discrimination and attack. Fifteen men came to their house, tied his parents' hands behind their backs, and forced them to stand in a pool of water up to their shoulders until Mohan's brothers could pay for their release. The couple were kept like this for 17 hours. When Mohan got married, local people forced him and his wife to take part in a Hindu marriage ceremony, and would not allow them to perform a Christian wedding. When Mohan's father died, their Hindu relatives wouldn't allow him to be buried in the village; Mohan's family had to bury him in the jungle.

"I thank all the brothers and sisters who sent me help and prayed for me."

But your support has been vital for Mohan and his family. After the attack on Mohan's parents, our local partners were able to pay for their medical expenses. "Without your support, they would have died," Mohan says.

Our local partners have also been able to give Mohan's pastor training on the legal rights of Christians and the responsibilities of the police. Many believers are uneducated and don't know about their rights or even that the police are supposed to help them, so such training is vital.

Earlier this year, after Mohan was harassed about his Christian faith by a group of drunk men carrying sticks, Mohan's pastor supported Mohan to take this incident to the police. At first the police refused to help, but eventually a police official told the villagers that Mohan is allowed to be a Christian, and they must stop persecuting him.

Mohan feels much safer now. He says, "I don't have to move to another village. Three other families who were pushed out of the village are seriously considering coming back. I thank all the brothers and sisters who sent me their help and prayed for me."

PERSECUTION IN INDIA — KEY FACTS

Population of India

1.3 billion

Number of Christians in India

63.9 million, 5 per cent of the population

Position on the World Watch List

2015 – number 21

2016 – number 17

2017 – number 15

Number of Christians attacked

2015 – Over 350

2016 – Over 800

2017 – January to March – over 250



DOUBLY AT RISK

Christian women and girls are doubly at risk in many parts of India. Being female is already a disadvantage: in rural areas, many girls are not enrolled in school and are expected to work at home. The 2011 census showed that while the male literacy rate in India is 82.14 per cent, the female literacy rate is just 65.46 per cent. Women and girls are frequently victims of violence and domestic abuse; in one study carried out by the UN in India, 52 per cent of women said they had experienced some form of violence from a partner in their lifetime.

Being a Christian only adds to the vulnerability faced by many women in India. "If you are a woman from a minority, you are a second class citizen," says Arun Pannalal, president of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum.



Sonika*, pictured left, has experienced many of these challenges first-hand. After she became a Christian, she felt God calling her into full-time ministry, despite having quite a basic level of education. But her husband, who was not a believer yet, was angry about this.

She says, "Because of my involvement in the ministry my husband beat me brutally one day. I was very sad and I started weeping and complaining to the Lord about how my husband tortured me daily. But I felt that God was showing me the map of India. He told me, 'I will use you throughout the country.' 'I replied, 'I will not go, neither am I educated nor have any resources. There are other women, you can use them.' But God told me again, 'You will go in my name and I will meet all the needs.'"

"As the days went by God worked in the heart of my husband. He used to see things happening in the name of Jesus, he saw how people were healed. My husband came to faith and asked forgiveness to the Lord for all his wrongdoings. He then started earning for the family and started supporting me in my ministry."

Sonika now leads a women's prayer fellowship and is an active evangelist. With help from Open Doors supporters, she was recently able to attend a Standing Strong Through the Storm seminar for women run by Open Doors partners, and it was a great encouragement to her. She says, "This was a life changing seminar for me; here God reminded me through his Word that I was not forsaken and again I saw a vision here wherein many doors were being opened. I believe God is blessing many churches through this seminar and is opening many new doors for people like me."

'PERSECUTION WILL COME'

Reena*, pictured right, is another young woman who is reaching out with the gospel, despite the persecution she has faced. She is just 19, and all she has ever known is persecution – her parents came to faith when she was a child. When she was young, other children wouldn't play with her because her family were Christians, and her parents weren't allowed to draw water from the village well. She says, "My parents explained that persecution will come when you are a Christian. And I was not jealous of the Hindus, because Jesus gave me joy inside."

But the persecution became more extreme when she started working at a local school last year. She says, "The headmaster offered me some

LEFT Sonika's husband came to faith in Christ through her courageous witness

*Name changed for security reasons



Reena was drugged and kidnapped because of her faith

"It is because of all your help that I am a recovered person today."

Indian sweets, which I ate. I don't remember anything after that." She was drugged during a teachers meeting and taken away; she was missing for several days. She says she doesn't remember what happened during that time, but it may be that the memories are simply too painful for her to talk about.

Eventually she woke up on a train, with no idea where she was. When she saw the name of a city on a sign in the train station, she realised she was about 14 hours from her home village. She was able to phone a friend in the city who contacted her parents; they took her to hospital, and Open Doors partners were able to provide her with medical assistance and encouragement.

For a time Reena was very afraid, and struggled to understand what had happened to her. "I had all these questions. Why did this

happen? And why did the villagers target me?"

But she felt God comfort and heal her during a church service, and her physical pain and depression grew less. She says, "I was really touched by God. When I came home, I was overjoyed and shared it with my 'friends'. Which friends? My Hindu friends, of course. I wanted them to come to a similar church service and also experience God's healing power in their lives."

Despite all that Reena has been through, she still longs to share the gospel with others. "My future is very bright. I will share the gospel with non-believers."

She says, "I want to thank all those who supported me through prayers, financial help and standing with me in all my struggles and whatever I went through. It is because of all your help that I am a recovered person today."

WHY HAS PERSECUTION IN INDIA BECOME SO EXTREME?



Despite being the world's largest democracy, with a constitution that guarantees freedom of religion and belief, extremism is thriving in India. The Indian government is led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and turns a blind eye to attacks on minorities.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is a militant Hindu nationalist group linked with the BJP. Rajeshwar Singh, one of the leaders of this group, has stated on national media that the RSS will make India free of Christians and Muslims by 31 December 2021.

Pastor Sandeep Kumar*, an Open Doors partner, says, "The assertiveness of Hindu extremism has grown relatively bolder after BJP assumed power. The natural hatred of RSS for the religious minorities and specifically for Christians is being vehemently expressed in the form of killing of Christians, attacks on church worship, distribution of anti-Christian tracts and booklets, rape of nuns and Christian girls, and treating Christian children unfairly in the schools. This list is ever increasing as violence and injustice against Christians has reached its highest level by the silent ascent of the BJP government."

And it's not just about turning a blind eye to violent attacks. There are anti-conversion laws in five of India's states, and the Indian government

has proposed introducing such a law nationwide. These laws are used disproportionately against minorities; Christians can be falsely accused of forcing Hindus to become Christians as an excuse to harass and arrest them, as Sohan experienced. Hindu nationalists see Hinduism as the true religion of India, so when an Indian person converts or returns to Hinduism, it is not seen as a conversion but a 'ghar wapsi' or 'homecoming': they are exempt from the anti-conversion laws.

Alongside violent attack and arrest, many Christians face daily, grinding pressure from their families and communities. Think of Reena and her family, who were refused access to the well in their village because of their faith in Jesus; every time they needed water, they had to walk several miles to collect it from a river. Think of how many times a day you use water.

Pastor Sandeep says, "The social boycott of the Christian believers is often used as a potent tool for persecuting Christians. The village committee sometimes demands that the Christians leave Christianity if they want to live in the community. The Christians are being denied the use of basic common or government facilities."

THANK YOU FOR SPEAKING OUT!

Last year, 2,434 people wrote to the Indian High Commission on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in India – thank you! This year, our advocacy team have been engaging with the EU on persecution in India, and our CEO Lisa Pearce and Head of Advocacy Zoe Smith met with the Head of the India team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to speak out for our Indian church family. Please pray for wisdom as we continue to advocate for our persecuted brothers and sisters.

SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH FAMILY IN INDIA



Our partners like Pastor Sandeep are facing increasing challenges as they carry out their work – they are monitored more closely, face greater pressure from the government, and it is becoming more dangerous for them to travel. And yet, they are determined to keep following Jesus and serving His people, and as the needs of our church family grow, we are scaling up our support. The church in India needs our prayers and support now more than ever.

One of the ways that we assist persecuted believers is through Rapid Response teams. These are teams of local volunteers who can help to provide urgent aid such as food and medicines, as well as giving legal advice, immediately after an attack. Open Doors partners have been working with local churches in India since 2000, and Open Doors' network of contacts and years of experience enable our partners to respond quickly when incidents of violent persecution occur.

Our partners are also providing longterm assistance, such as vocational training to help believers to support themselves, adult literacy programmes, and legal training so that believers can understand their rights and how to take persecution cases to the police – this is the training Mohan's pastor received.

After the incredible response to our appeal for our brothers and sisters in India last year, we have been able to increase our work in India by

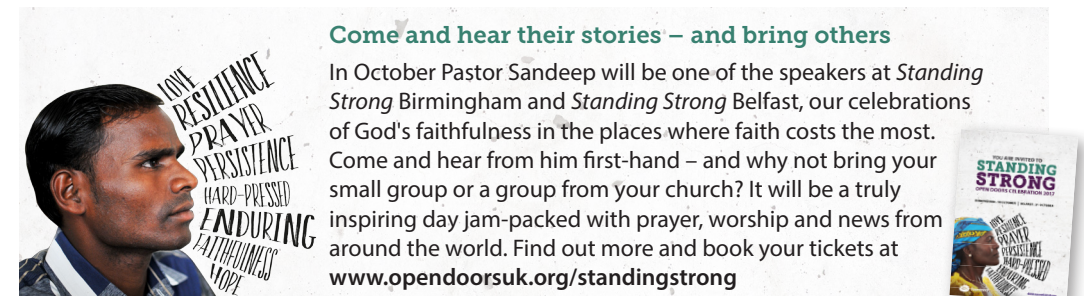
75 per cent this year. But none of this work would be possible without your prayers and gifts, and as levels of persecution increase in India, more of our brothers and sisters will need support. Please stand with your church family in India in prayer and action.

PRAY

- For strength, courage and protection for our brothers and sisters in India
- For healing for those who have experienced violent persecution
- For energy and wisdom for Open Doors partners as they step up their efforts to support persecuted believers
- For God to change the hearts of those who are persecuting Christians, and turn them to Himself.

GIVE

- **Every £15** provides five Bibles to encourage persecuted Christians in their faith.
- **Every £21** could resource a Rapid Response team of volunteers for a month as they give food, medical care and legal assistance, as well as comfort and support, to persecuted believers.
- **Every £52** helps to strengthen the church to withstand persecution by training two pastors to understand the legal rights of Christians in India.



Come and hear their stories – and bring others

In October Pastor Sandeep will be one of the speakers at *Standing Strong* Birmingham and *Standing Strong* Belfast, our celebrations of God's faithfulness in the places where faith costs the most. Come and hear from him first-hand – and why not bring your small group or a group from your church? It will be a truly inspiring day jam-packed with prayer, worship and news from around the world. Find out more and book your tickets at www.opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong

SECRET CHILDREN: THE LONG JOURNEY TO HEALING

Three children in Indonesia who were badly burned when a petrol bomb was thrown at them during a church service are receiving financial support, toys and care, thanks to supporters who give and pray regularly for children.

In the picture on the right sits Alvaro Sinaga, aged four-and-a-half. And to the right of him, the smiling Trinity Hutahaeen (four) joins him.

It was last year, on 13 November 2016, that they were playing with two of their friends, Anita Sihotang and Intan Banjarnahor, in Samarinda, east Borneo. Sunday School had finished and they had some free time before the main church service ended, when an explosion ripped through the playgroup.

A terrorist had thrown a bomb at the youngsters – all of them suffered devastating burns. But none more so than two-year-old Intan.

One day later, Intan died.

"It was just a week after we returned from North Sumatra to attend my mother-in-law's funeral," says her mother, Diana Sinaga. "So we were already in deep sorrow... Intan brightened up the house with her singing and never ending questions, and now she's gone. It feels so quiet."

"I BELIEVE THAT HE WILL BE ALRIGHT"

Alvaro (pictured with his parents below) suffered from severe burn injuries on half of his head, neck and hand. He has since had 26 operations, and was finally able to go back home in late April.



"There were moments when I was broken-hearted and lost hope," said Alvaro's father, Hotdiman Sinaga. "He is my precious joy and pride, he is smart and handsome. I believe he will be alright. God's Word says that He will never let me be tempted beyond my strength. His promise has become my strength. Alvaro is my only child and I have to be strong."

"I SAW HER HEAD COVERED WITH SMOKE"

Trinity's mother, Sarinah, was on duty as church elder when she heard the blast. "I saw her head covered with smoke and her face black. Her body was so hot that I had to rip away her clothes."

Trinity, the most severely burned of the three, is undergoing steroid injections to remove keloid (scarring) – a painful process.

Despite the hurt, Sarinah knew that she must forgive the perpetrator. Sarinah said, "I don't have any hatred towards the bomber. I forgave him already. The most important thing is for my daughter to recover well."

"WE FEEL POWERLESS TO CHANGE THE SITUATION"

Two-year-old Anita was the youngest of the bomb victims. She spent one month in hospital and still has to go back for check-ups. Anita has not yet forgotten the sound of the explosion. Whenever her father starts the motorcycle engine, she runs away.

Her father, Jackson Sihotang, recalls seeing

LEFT Alvaro and Trinity TOP Anita and her father BELOW Diana Sinaga and her husband holding a photo of their daughter Intan who died in the attack.

the children afraid by fireworks on New Year's Eve: "It's so heart-breaking to see them that dreadful night. And we felt so powerless to change the situation."

THE JOURNEY TO HOPE

Since the attack, the children's families have been struggling to get their lives back together. They battle physical pain, trauma, anger, guilt, a sense of powerlessness... But positive progress is being made.

The children are also beginning to regain some self-esteem. Alvaro often uses his hands to display the 'peace' symbol. And Trinity has a contagious spirit that keeps her smiling.

For Intan's family, a new arrival is bringing hope and life back into the home. "This baby," says Diana of her new baby girl, "she cures our longing to see my late daughter."

Alongside local churches and mission agencies, Open Doors workers have visited the children and their families multiple times since the tragic attack. As well as practical support, Open Doors has spent time praying with the families and produced a video of prayers and greetings from staff members' children to encourage them.

"That prayer, it goes straight to my heart," said Trinity's mother. "Your gifts and support, and that from other churches and believers, have helped to remind us that there are many



good people out there. Thank you for keeping us in your prayers."

Indonesia ranks as number 46 on Open Doors' 2017 World Watch List. Christians here are facing increasing dangers from radical Islamist groups, who are gaining in popularity throughout Indonesia – the most populous Muslim nation in the world.

"Your gifts and support... have helped to remind us that there are many good people out there."

Thank you for your prayers for Alvaro, Trinity and Anita. Please continue to pray for them and for other secret children of the church around the world, whose stories are regularly featured in the Open Doors Prayer Diary.

• PRAY

- That Alvaro, Trinity and Anita would be healed and grow in their love for the Lord
- For strength for their parents and grace to forgive their children's attackers
- For Open Doors staff providing protection, provision and education to persecuted children around the world.

REBUILD HOPE

in Syria and Iraq

In the past seven years, millions have been displaced by the conflict in Iraq and Syria, their communities devastated by so-called Islamic State. What will the next seven years bring?

For those who want to return, it's an uphill struggle of rebuilding homes and villages from scratch. They need water, electricity, building equipment and heaps of encouragement. But they're not going to get that from their government.... unless Christians around the world speak out.

That's what the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign is for. That's how signing the global petition helps. That's why there's a new Open Doors resource to help you share this with your church.

The new *Rebuild Hope* pack gives you all the tools you need to put on an All-Age Service so that everyone can get involved. And it starts with Noah's story...

Home at last

It's a sunny day in spring and 12-year-old Noah has come home.

After three years of living in Erbil, he and his displaced family are visiting their village of Karamles, near Mosul. With them is Thabet, their church leader, who makes regular return visits these days to scope the devastation and plan for the future.

Over half the homes in this small village are currently uninhabitable, having been set on fire by so-called Islamic State (IS) fighters. Noah's house is one of them. Except for the charred walls and acrid smell of smoke, there's not much left. But Noah is upbeat. He's glad to be back.

Displaced church

It was on 6 August 2014 that IS seized control of Karamles. Their terrifying threats sent the entire village running for their lives. Together, they headed to Erbil, where they have since been living as a displaced community, waiting and praying for the moment when they can return.

That moment came at the end of October 2016, when Iraqi government forces began the battle for Mosul. IS fighters fled the village, but not before setting fire to over 400 homes, almost 100 of which were completely destroyed.

Noah's family were more fortunate. Fire destroyed almost everything inside the house - but the walls, the ceiling and the roof survived.

"After the liberation in October we found out that Islamic State had burned our house," he remembers, "I was very sad when I saw it for the first time." He points at some pieces of metal. "That was our computer." Nearby are the remnants of a Christian book. "My dad's."

During their time in Erbil, the challenges for the families have been huge and they've been glad of the vital help they've received through Open Doors partners in Iraq, including food and other essentials, trauma training, women's activities and church events. Some have been assisted in generating businesses so that they can become self-reliant. Others in finding employment.

'I want to return'

Upstairs, in his bedroom, Noah sees the metal frame of his bed, buckled in the heat of the flames. He walks around, picking things up or turning them over with his shoes. Suddenly he notices something at his feet. "My marbles!" he exclaims, "I had many of them." He gathers a few, making space for his treasure on the dirty floor, then starts looking for more. Soon he has collected enough to play a game.

Smiling, he makes his way up to the rooftop. From here he can see the whole village, all badly damaged by IS. It's a depressing sight, but Noah is determined: "We want to return home. We thank everyone who is helping us. I know there are others from our village who don't want to return," he says, "but I do want to return. This is our land."

Speak up for Noah

The global petition speaks up for Christians living in Iraq and Syria who have no chance of speaking to their own governments. Support them as they call for **equality, dignity and responsibility**.

To date, the global petition has over 280,000 signatures from around 100 different countries in the world - persecuted and not persecuted - but the aim is to reach one million. Join with the body of Christ around the world in making their call ring out loud and clear!

How can your church help?

The first - and easiest - place to speak up for your brothers and sisters has got to be within the church family. So please get the word out to everyone in your church:

- Share the call
- Sign the petition
- Pray fervently
- Give cheerfully.

Put on an All-Age Service

One of the ways you could do this is to put on an All-Age Service. The new *Rebuild Hope* pack contains an outline for an All-Age Service, telling the story of Noah. It can help anyone - of whatever age - understand the situation for families like his and help build a better future for them.

The *Rebuild Hope* pack includes:

- Fun activities for adults and children
- Stimulating resources for prayer
- Brick-shaped copies of the global petition
- 'Let's get building' stickers.

Also available:

- Family-friendly film *Noah's Story*
- Powerpoint

To order the pack, call Inspire on **01993 460015** or go to **www.opendoorsuk.org**

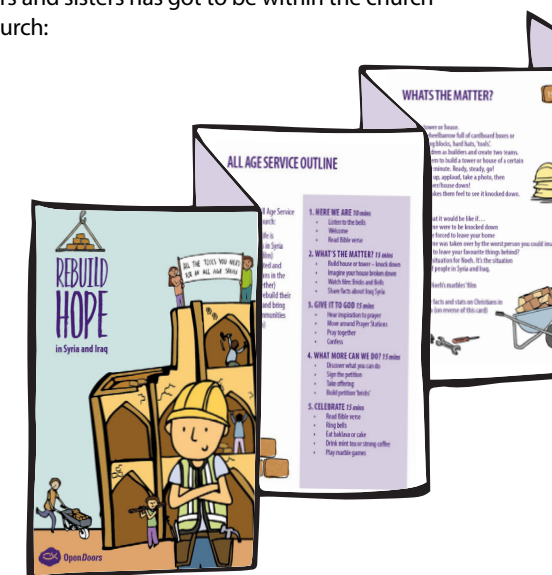


"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, restorer of Streets with Dwellings."
Isaiah 58:12

One Million Voices of Hope

The petition will be presented to:
11 December: the United Nations
13 December: the UK government
Please put a date in your diary to share the petition with your church soon - or, at the latest, by the end of November.
Thank you!

The International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church is on Sunday 19 November 2017.



Ring out the bells of freedom!

One of the first things many Iraqi Christians do on revisiting their villages from their displaced communities is to ring their church bells.

Identify with them - and stand in solidarity with their call for hope and freedom - by ringing your church bells on **Wednesday 13 December**, when the global petition is presented to the UK government. More information to come but talk to your friendly bell-ringers now!

#HOPE4ME #SAVE ME

26 BANGLADESH



Leader:
President Abdul Hamid

Population:
164.8 million
(866,000 Christians)

Main religion:
Islam

Government:
Parliamentary democracy

Source of persecution:
Islamic extremism/Religious nationalism



THE WORLD'S HIGHEST RISER

Persecution against Christians in Asia is rising – and no country has risen more places on the 2017 World Watch List than Bangladesh. In 2016, it ranked as number 35. This year, Bangladesh rose nine places to 26, showing that persecution against Christians is increasing at an alarming rate.

In 2016, at least three Christians were arrested for distributing aid and Bibles to refugees. Believers were abducted – some raped. Several Christians had to go into hiding. Four were murdered.

Though Bangladesh's constitution guarantees people the freedom to express any religion, in reality, believers are often discriminated against by both their communities and the authorities.

Increasingly worrying, though, are dangers posed by local and international extremist groups – which includes the so-called Islamic State. The four believers who were murdered for their faith last year were all killed by Bangladeshi militant Islamists. Christian schools, churches and businesses are also threatened, causing some to be abandoned entirely. One shop was torched by local militants last year.

Despite efforts from the country's secular government to curb the influence of extremism, around 4 million students are attending unknown numbers of privately-run madrassas (Islamic schools), which are having an unchecked influence on the youngsters' ideology. And 2 million young people are currently attending registered madrassas. Last year, nine perpetrators of a siege on a café in Dhaka, in which 20 were executed

for 'non-Muslim' beliefs, had all attended these madrassas.

JOY IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

When you meet Mosammot Josna Begum (47) and her daughter, Moushumi (28), it is striking to see how much they smile. The joy of Christ radiates from them. Despite facing relentless struggles – poverty, loss, persecution – these women continue to draw strength from the Lord.

Josna and her family were already poor. But their troubles only increased after they converted from Islam to Christianity. Moushumi's husband divorced her because of her new faith, forcing Moushumi and her three children to move in with her father and Josna. Finances were stretched. But just three years later, tragedy struck. Josna's husband died, plunging the family into even greater poverty.

Josna and Moushumi were desperate. While Christians in Bangladesh frequently experience discrimination in education and employment, believers from a Muslim background (BMBs) face even worse treatment. Josna and Moushumi lost the support of their family and community because of their faith and, like many BMBs, were only given low-paid jobs that did not cover the costs of living.

ENTERPRISING LIVESTOCK BUSINESS

To help relieve Josna and Moushumi's financial pressures, Open Doors provided them with livelihood aid – they received five goats!

"After a year, the goats had two more kids," says



Moushumi (LEFT) and Josna (RIGHT)

Josna, happily. "We kept the kids and sold the five goats for two cows instead. Later, we sold the cows and, with that money and a small loan from the village credit programme, we bought a small piece of land – on which we plan to build our house later. The two calves that we kept earlier have multiplied into seven and are still multiplying!"

Josna and Moushumi continue to work hard to support the family. Besides the earnings from their livestock, they also work in hotels and as housemaids to earn extra income so they can pay their loan instalments and support the children's education in school.

SETTING ASIDE TIME FOR GOD

Even in the midst of such busyness, Josna and Moushumi still set aside time for God. As talented folk singers, they use music to praise Him and encourage others.

"We've composed about 20 worship songs that have been sung in different Christian events in our village," Josna shares. Besides that, the pair have composed songs that raise awareness of child marriages in their village – another prevalent issue in the country.

Asked if they plan to remarry, both shake their heads, saying: "We don't want to remarry. We want

to live with Christ. Until now, He has provided for all our needs and will continue to do so. Thank you, Open Doors, for helping us in our difficulties. Please pray for us so that we can live well and glorify God through our songs."

Open Doors' livelihood projects support many rejected BMB families like Josna's to earn an income.

"Thank you, Open Doors, for helping us in our difficulties"

"We have the joy of God in our heart, which shows in our faces and attitude," Josna says. "We can be happy forever because of Christ, though we live in poverty."

• PRAY

- Thank God for Josna and Moushumi's enterprising attitude and inspiring joy
- For BMBs who struggle to make ends meet because of their faith, and for Open Doors teams supporting them
- Ask the Lord to protect those vulnerable to the influence of Islamist extremists.


ORDER YOUR 2017 WORLD WATCH CHURCH PACK



Find out about the latest trends, high-risers and hotspots of persecution, and share it with your church by ordering the Open Doors 2017 World Watch Church Pack. Includes the World Watch Guide, which lists the 50 countries where faith costs the most, a poster-sized World Watch Map and Youth resources.

Visit www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution or contact the Inspire team on 01993 460015 to order your pack today!

**Name changed for security reasons*



SINGLED OUT DOUBLY AT RISK

Violent attacks against Christians in India are becoming more frequent, and being both a Christian and a woman can make you doubly vulnerable.

At just 19, Reena was drugged and kidnapped because of her faith in Jesus. After several days she was finally released, and Open Doors local partners were able to pay for her medical care, thanks to your prayers and support. She says, "It is because of all your help that I am a recovered person today."

As Christians face increasing levels of violence and persecution in India, Open Doors local partners need to urgently scale up their work – but they can only do that with your prayers and support.

EVERY £21

could resource a Rapid Response team of volunteers for a month as they give food, medical care and legal assistance, as well as comfort and support, to persecuted believers like Reena.

EVERY £52

helps to strengthen the church to withstand persecution by training two pastors to understand the legal rights of Christians in India.

Please act today, and give a gift to help believers like Reena in India. Use the enclosed response form, visit www.opendoorsuk.org or call our Inspire Team on 01993 460015.

100% of your donation will go directly to supporting persecuted Christians in India.



OpenDoors

60 years of serving persecuted Christians