



OpenDoors

magazine

60 years of serving persecuted Christians

November 2017

INSIDE:

• **PART OF
YOUR FAMILY**

The children of the
persecuted church

• **JOY TO THE WORLD!**

How your support has
changed lives in 2017

**SPEAK UP
FOR NOEH**

**LAST CHANCE TO SIGN AND SHARE
THE PETITION DEADLINE 4 DECEMBER**

It's not too late to add more names to the global *Hope for the Middle East* petition - but please hurry! Please share the petition enclosed with this magazine with as many people as you can.

You can also order our free all-age service pack, *Rebuild Hope*, to help you share the campaign with your church. You have until 4 December! To order a pack email inspire@opendoorsuk.org or go to www.opendoorsuk.org



A heart for adventure?

Join a short delivery trip to North Africa and make a lasting impact on the growth of the church.

A heart for prayer?

Come and pray for a nation in the Far East where Christians face extreme persecution.

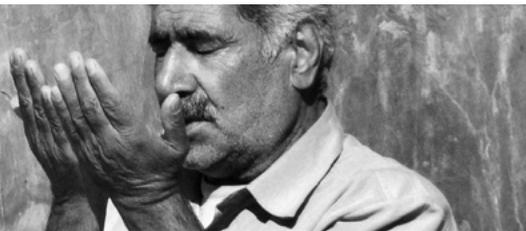
Open Doors prayer trips are not for the faint-hearted - but if you think this is for you, contact us to find out more.

SMUGGLE HOPE. DELIVER LOVE.

To find out more about travelling with Open Doors go to www.opendoorsuk.org or email travelteam@opendoorsuk.org

Image used for illustrative purposes

**ONE CHURCH
ONE MONTH
ONE PRAYER**



Will you unite with the church worldwide to pray for and support the persecuted church?

In partnership with religious liberty organisations including the Evangelical Alliance, CSW and Release International, Open Doors is dedicating November as a special month of prayer for the persecuted church. We've produced a written prayer for churches and small groups to use on the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church (19 November) - or another Sunday in November that suits you.

To order the *Rebuild Hope* pack to help your church pray and speak out for Christians in Iraq and Syria, go to www.opendoorsuk.org
To download the One Church prayer and for more resources, go to www.eauk.org/rlc



Letter from Lisa: Expectation

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: Boy enjoying a Sunday School Christmas celebration in south Egypt.

Time is running out for the petition - and for our church family in the Middle East. I'm so grateful that so many have signed and shared. I know it can be uncomfortable asking friends and family to do something like this. But it means so much to our persecuted brothers and sisters to know they're not forgotten.

We are hoping that Noeh, now 12 years old, will be able to come with his father to New York to present the petition and represent the hopes and dreams of the Christian minority in Iraq and Syria.

Noeh represents everything the *Hope for the Middle East* campaign stands for. Both his vulnerability as a child who's had to flee his home - and his courage and determination to rebuild. It's vital that the Christian witness continues to shine and that extremism will not overcome love and tolerance.

I vividly recall some years ago meeting a faithful sister from Uzbekistan. She had two small children and was seven months pregnant with a third. They were on the run because of their commitment to Jesus and were being housed in an Open Doors safe house. She was coping with such strength and grace, but at one point her face crumpled. "The worst thing of all," she said, "is that my son didn't have his father to take him to school on his first day."

Why? Because this father was in prison for his faith.

What amazes me is how often the children of persecuted Christians are inspired by their parents' courage to be shining lights, themselves, for Christ. Take Sofia, for example, whose

"A wonderful gift may not be wrapped as you expect."

Jonathan Lockwood Huie

story you may remember. After her parents were martyred in 2009, she was taken in by the Open Doors Children's Centre in Colombia. It would be so natural to be bitter and angry but today she radiates love and says of God: "He is wonderful. I want to be with Him for all my life."

Sofia's story shows how important it is to be with these children, who are suffering because of their parent's courage and faithfulness, for the long-term. The consequences of persecution are not 'here today and gone tomorrow'. Rebuilding hope and expectation takes time.

So thank you for all you have done, and are doing, to support persecuted Christians around the world. Please continue bringing hope to children and their families this Christmas. My prayer is that during this season, they - and indeed all of us - will be filled with the knowledge of God's love, and the joy and hope He brings.

The Christmas story is a reminder that there can be joy, even in the harshest circumstances. Unexpectedly, amidst the poverty of that household and the squalor of the birth, there was good news of great joy: God is with us.

In other words: hope is here.

Lisa Pearce
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

WORLD WATCH NEWS



LEFT Rohingya refugee child

"I was in so much distress as I have no food to feed my child. May God bless you all."

Yunus, Rohingya refugee

BANGLADESH: Open Doors delivers lifesaving aid to Rohingya refugees

Open Doors has delivered food aid to 1,000 Rohingya families living in a makeshift refugee camp in Bangladesh.

Over half a million Rohingya people have fled violence in Rakhine state, Myanmar, in the last few weeks and are seeking refuge across the border in Bangladesh. With little food or safe water, most are suffering from fever and water-borne diseases.

When the team arrived, they found that the recent rains had flooded the camp. Some areas were covered by two feet of water and thick, deep mud. "We found many of them sick with fever and in severe need of food and medicine," said one team member. "Some were living by the road side, while others were in makeshift tents that provide little coverage from the rain and storms."

Despite some initial problems with the authorities, the team were able to distribute food, clothes and plastic sheets to construct shelters. One woman, Johura, was crying loudly as she received her food. She said, "God will bless you. I'm so hopeless. I don't know how many days we can live like this but your help means a lot."

Another refugee, Yunus, said, "Thank you for your help. I was in so much distress as I have no food to feed my child. May God bless you all."

To be a Christian Rohingya is to be an outcast of the outcasts. Myanmar refuses to acknowledge Rohingyas, saying they are Bengali immigrants. On top of this, they are ostracised by their own people, as the Rohingya tribe rejects Christians who have converted from Islam.

FLOODS CAUSE DEVASTATION

While the Rohingya refugee crisis is snatching the headlines, Bangladesh is also providing aid to their own citizens, after torrential monsoon rains caused severe flooding, leaving hundreds dead and nearly 300,000 displaced.

Bangladeshi Christians who had lost everything said that they faced discrimination in the government aid distribution that followed because of their faith in Christ. Open Doors has distributed relief to 247 Christian families in Bangladesh. Thankfully, with this support, over a thousand believers from Muslim or Hindu backgrounds have received life-saving food aid.

"Our family of five was in a

"We feel so blessed that you remembered us in our suffering."

crisis due to the prolonged flood," says Nasir Ali, one of the victims and a recipient of the aid. "We feel so blessed that you remembered us in our suffering."

"Continue to uphold in prayer all the affected believers for strength and comfort," writes an Open Doors worker. "Pray for all relief and rehabilitation efforts."

• PRAY

- Praise God that Open Doors was able to deliver this aid, thanks to the generosity of our supporters
- That a proper place of refuge and safety would be provided for the refugees
- For peace in Myanmar and a resolution to this conflict.



Many Rohingya refugees are living in makeshift tents



Parts of the camp were covered in 2 feet of water



The Open Doors team were able to distribute food and materials for shelters



A Rohingya man receiving relief aid from the Open Doors team

IRAQ: Christians fear vote will bring more violence

Christians in Iraq fear a renewed outbreak of violence following a controversial referendum on independence in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The referendum resulted in a 93 per cent vote in favour of independence. But the Iraqi government has called it 'unconstitutional' and its parliament has even proposed sending troops to the oil-rich region of Kirkuk and other disputed areas.

"The Nineveh Plains are a disputed area," says Hannah*, a local fieldworker. "In the case of a civil war this might become one of the most affected areas."

After Mosul and the Nineveh

Plains were liberated from Islamic extremists, churches in the region started to rebuild, and some Christians are back in their homes. But others who might join them are now waiting to see what will happen after the vote.

The current instability highlights the importance of the *Hope for the Middle East* petition – which calls for equality, dignity and a role in reconciling and rebuilding society for Christians and other minorities in Iraq and Syria. If you haven't already done so, please sign and share the petition today.



• PRAY

- That Christians would be able to return to their homes
- For stability and peace in the region.

VIETNAM: Christians forbidden to meet or preach

Vietnamese authorities are continuing their crackdown on Christian activities.

Duong*, 28, became a Christian three years ago. In March, he and his family were told by local leaders that believing in God is anti-Communist and that they should stop preaching and renounce their faith in Christ. When he ignored them and continued to preach, Duong and his family were taken before local government authorities. They have to report their whereabouts to the authorities and have been forced to sign documents preventing them from preaching the gospel.

Elsewhere, a house church congregation were reported to the police and forced to sign a document prohibiting them from gathering. Despite this, they courageously carried on meeting,

resulting in the police breaking into the church service, destroying the property, and assaulting the pastor, Tua*, who was taken to hospital with a head injury.

Vietnam is 17 on the World Watch List. Despite increasing violence against believers, the church is growing, especially among ethnic minorities.

• PRAY

- For strength for Duong and a speedy recovery for Tua
- For protection for Christians who face violence and abuse
- For Open Doors partners supporting the church with Bibles, training, advocacy support and emergency relief.



Duong (and his family) were forced to sign a paper prohibiting him from preaching

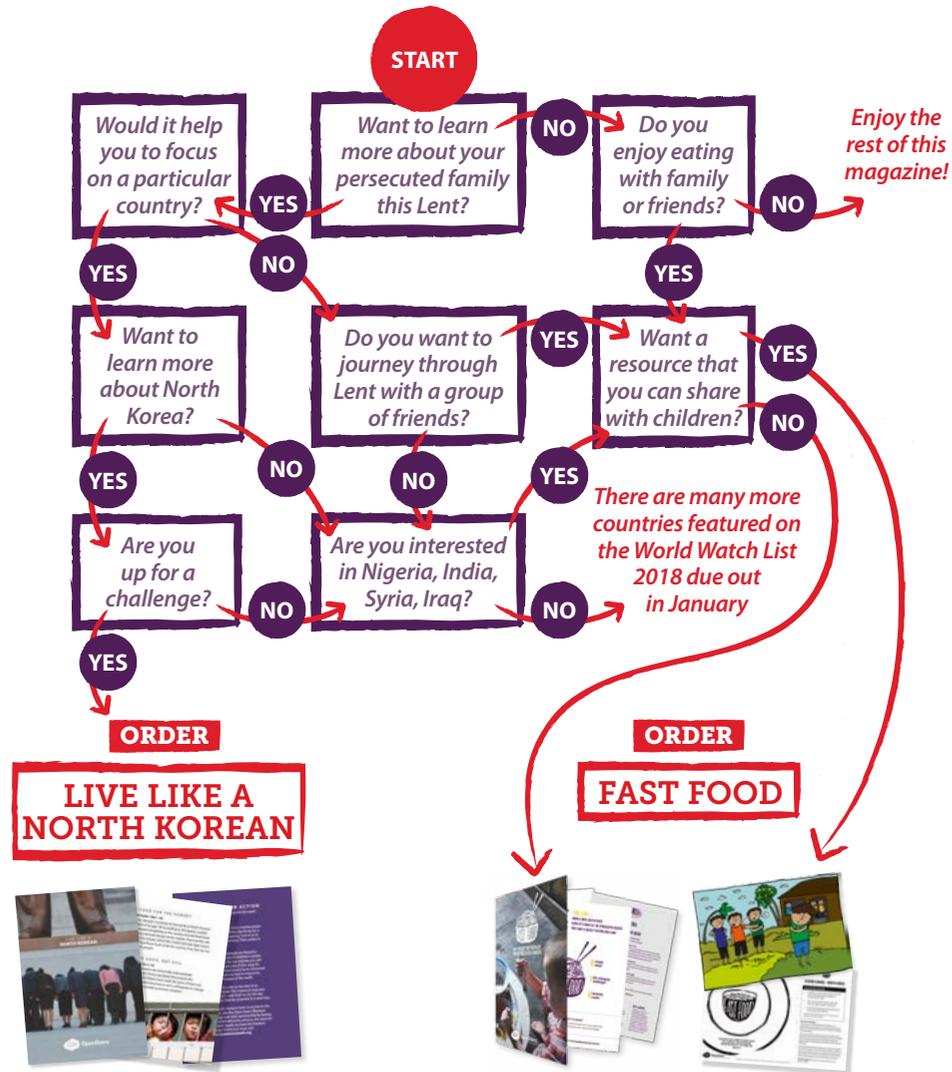


Tua, who was taken to hospital with a head injury

*Names changed for security reasons

LOOKING AHEAD TO LENT

While most of us are counting down the days to Christmas, others may be planning even further ahead! So if you're thinking about what to do for Lent in 2018, why not try this little light-hearted quiz to help you choose your resource?



- Focus on extreme persecution in North Korea
- Daily prayers and reflections for individuals
- Challenging follow-up activities
- Downloadable resources for small groups

"Please know that your prayers have been answered... never before have I seen so many North Koreans come to faith."
- Open Doors contact in China

- Easy introduction to the persecuted church
- Variety of films for adults or children/families
- Fun and food-related activities for all ages
- Short prayer and Bible-based content

"Wow! The Fast Food packs are superb. Your resources are outstanding!"
- Tori, ex-teacher and local preacher

To order either of these resources, go online to www.opendoorsuk.org or contact Inspire on 01993 460015 or inspire@opendoorsuk.org



Eleven-year-old Wasihun is able to go to school thanks to the prayers and gifts of his global church family

PART OF YOUR FAMILY

Wasihun is an eleven-year-old boy from Oromia State in Western Ethiopia. In many ways, he is just like other children his age. He likes to play football, he helps his Mum with chores, and he plays with his siblings – he has eight brothers and sisters, so he's never short of a playmate! He likes school too – he says, "I am happy to go to school. I have friends to play with and I love learning."

If you met this confident, friendly young boy today, you might not guess the traumatic events he has lived through. When Wasihun was just seven, he watched as his father was murdered for his faith in Jesus. Wasihun has spent four Christmases without his father, and this year will be the fifth.

The heart-breaking truth is that children around

the world are bearing the horrific consequences of persecution every day. Some are bullied by other children in their community, or denied access to education. Some, like Wasihun, have lost one or both of their parents. Other children face violent attack themselves. It's hard to believe anyone would be so cruel as to attack an innocent child, but it happens all too often.

But even if the parents of these children have been killed or imprisoned, they still have a family – the global church. And that includes you.

Open Doors' vision is that every child who faces persecution is reached with protection, provision and education. Our secret contacts and underground networks allow our workers to reach children even in



Wasihun was just seven when his father was killed

"I cannot imagine life without your help."

– Buze, mother of Wasihun and eight other children



Three of Wasihun's siblings with letters of encouragement from Open Doors supporters

the most violent and dangerous places with love and long-term support, thanks to your prayers and gifts. We'd like to introduce you to some of the children who are part of your church family.

A FATHER TO THE FATHERLESS

Wasihun's father was called Motuma Kemedede. The family were the only Christians in a village of Animists, and when Motuma refused to take part in Animist rituals, the community became increasingly hostile towards him. He received repeated insults and verbal warnings to renounce his faith.

The day he died started like any other; he got up early and prepared for his job as a casual labourer on a nearby farm. Wasihun remembers, "On the day before the night my Dad was killed, it was raining. We worked the whole day and got home late."

That night, the villagers decided to carry out their threats. Buze, Wasihun's mother, remembers, "It was in the middle of the night when they broke into our house. I was shocked. There were three of them in the house, but others were waiting outside. I heard them shout to each other, 'Stab him!'"

Wasihun remembers, "I was holding on to his legs when they dragged him over the floor. They stabbed him to death."

Open Doors partners went to visit Wasihun and his family immediately after this horrific event occurred. As you can imagine, they were completely

distraught. Wasihun kept crying, saying, "My father promised to bring me roasted maize." Such a simple wish had been brutally snatched away.

On top of the grief of Motuma's murder, the family wondered how they would survive without him – they had struggled to make ends meet even when he was alive.

But your prayers and support have enabled Open Doors to support Wasihun and his family for the long term, almost since the day Motuma died. Our local partners have been able to visit the family to encourage them, bring letters of encouragement from around the world, provide food and school fees for the children, and support Buze with income generating projects.

Wasihun says, "My father used to work from early until the sun set to fulfil what was needed in the house. And when he died, we all gave up. We thought we had no hope. But the Lord added all we needed. God provided for us."

Buze says, "Your presence was more valuable than anything for me. It made me feel I have brothers and sisters who care for us. My hope continues because you supported me emotionally and economically. With the help I had from you, I was also able to buy one cow and feed my children cheese, milk and yogurt. I am now also able to buy and sell things at the market. I also mill peppers and sell it.

"Thanks to you, my brothers and sisters, I have been able to more than survive with my family. I cannot imagine life without your help. I would not have survived with my nine children. I truly would love to bless all who showed their kindness to us.

"What can I say? I only have thankfulness to God for taking care of us."

Wasihun says, "I was totally shocked when my Dad was killed in front of me, but God comforted us and told us that He will be the Father of each of us."

Although no-one can bring Wasihun's father back, your gifts and prayers have ensured that his family are still provided for, and that Wasihun and his siblings can go to school, giving them the skills they need for the future.

Please continue to pray for Wasihun and his family, for comfort and provision. Please

Make persecuted children a part of your family

Many of the children being supported by Open Doors are living in some of the most dangerous places in the world, and we can't tell you about them for security reasons. But God knows each one of them by name, and you can pray for them trusting that He knows their needs.

Pull out the photo on the next page and put it somewhere you'll see it – perhaps on your fridge, a notice board or on your desk. Use it as a reminder to pray for secret persecuted children.

SEND AN EXTRA CHRISTMAS CARD TO PERSECUTED CHILDREN



Alvaro, Trinity and Anita were injured in a bomb attack at their Sunday school

The letters and cards from brothers and sisters around the world were a real source of encouragement to Wasihun and his family. We are no longer collecting cards for Wasihun, but we would like to ask you, and especially any children you may know, to write to three children in Indonesia: Alvaro (4½), Trinity (4) and Anita (2½).

One Sunday morning the children were playing outside their church in Samarinda, East Borneo, when a terrorist threw a petrol bomb at them. Alvaro, Trinity and Anita were all severely wounded, along with another young girl, Intan, who died the next day.

Alvaro, Trinity and Anita are slowly recovering, and your prayers and support have enabled Open Doors workers to provide them with toys, and their families with financial support. But they need our continuing prayers and encouragement. Alvaro says, "I am ashamed, my body is full scars."

Our team are particularly asking for other children to send cards, pictures and short messages. Could you share the story of Alvaro, Trinity and Anita with some children from your family or your church, and ask them to draw a picture or write a short message to send to them?

Because the children are so young, greeting cards, artwork created by children and postcards are best, rather than lots of writing. If you would like to write a short message, please do not mention Open Doors, and only include your name and country, not your full address. The families don't speak much English, so you may like to include a short message in Bahasa Indonesian. To find phrases in the national language please visit www.opendoorsuk.org/write.

Please put all cards in one envelope and send them to Open Doors UK, PO Box 6, Witney, OX29 6WG.



PRAY

- For protection for persecuted children and their families
- That God will provide for all their needs
- That they would know they are loved by God and their church family around the world
- That they would grow up to love Jesus and follow Him, and shine as lights in their communities.

also pray for protection – they are still a target, and have caught Animists from their village breaking into their home and trying to take their animals.

▶ See for yourself

To watch a short film about Wasihun and his family visit www.opendoorsuk.org

'ONE DAY THEY WILL BE LEADERS'

In countries where Christians are persecuted, Christian children are often denied access to an education, stopping them from gaining the skills they need for the future. This is the case in the Sharia governed states of northern Nigeria; Christian communities are frequently excluded from basic social services such as schools and clinics.

Christians in these states will attempt to provide education for their children themselves, but without outside help, their facilities are often extremely basic. In some places, classes are simply taught under trees, with rocks serving as chairs.

Your prayers and support have enabled Open Doors to build or renovate 16 schools in five of the northern states since 2005, providing education and hope for the future for hundreds of Christian children.

Felicia goes to one of the schools Open Doors was able to renovate, including putting up a new library, which is Felicia's favourite place in the school. "Thank you for providing this library," she says.

Another student at the school, Suleman (12), says, "I want to become a doctor. Thank you for providing me with a place where I can learn."

Another, Ashirua (11), says, "I am proud to be a student in this school with beautiful buildings, a nice library and Christian teachers. I can study to become what God wants me to be. I pray for those who build this school for us."

"Our sleepless nights over the future of our children are taken care of by Open Doors."

Rev Umaru, a church leader from the community, says, "We are extremely happy to know how the body of Christ in other parts of the world cares for us. Our children receive quality education and one day they will be leaders."

Mr Markus, the father of one of the students,



Open Doors has been able to support schools like this one in northern Nigeria so Christian children can receive an education



Sofia's face can't be shared with you for security reasons

says, "Our sleepless nights over the future of our children are taken care of by Open Doors."

'A VERY SPECIAL HELP'

With the right support and care, the children of the persecuted church can grow up to become leaders of their communities.

Seventeen-year-old Sofia is already doing just that – you may remember her from our Secret Children campaign in 2011. She wants to become a teacher, and uses her testimony as an encouragement to others. She says, "I use my story to tell others that, for those who love God, all things work together for good. I try to make people understand that we do not have to turn away from God because of difficult circumstances."

She doesn't say this lightly. Sofia is from Colombia, and when she was 9, both of her parents were murdered for their faith. They had been members of the National Liberation Army, an illegal armed group, but when they decided to follow Jesus and leave this violent group, the militants were angry.

A few years after leaving the National Liberation

Army, when both of Sofia's parents had become pastors, they were shot. Jose Rodriguez, Sofia's father, was shot six times, and her mother, Emilse Maria del Carmen, was shot eight times. They both died in hospital shortly after the attack.

At first, Sofia couldn't understand why God had allowed this to happen. "Isn't God supposed to listen to our prayers? Why didn't He answer our prayers?" she asked.

"If I had not come here, my life out there would be completely different."

Thanks to the long-term support and prayers of people who have committed to give and pray regularly for children, Sofia was able to come and live in the Children's Centre run by Open Doors, where she could receive an education, counselling and love.

Be family to a persecuted child this Christmas

Wasihun has had to celebrate his last few Christmases without his father, and Sofia hasn't had either of her parents to share a gift with in recent years. But thanks to the faithful support of their global church family, they haven't been alone or forgotten; Open Doors partners and workers are committed to walking with children like them, ensuring that they are safe, provided for, receive an education, and know that they are loved.

Many believers around the world, like Wasihun's father and Sofia's parents, have sacrificed their lives for their faith in Christ – but with the help of people like you, this doesn't have to destroy the lives of their children. We, their global church family, will be there for them.

Could you make the children of the persecuted church a part of your family this Christmas? You can do this in two ways.

PRAY FOR THEM

You can use the enclosed prayer diary to find prayer points for persecuted children, or pull out the picture in the centre of this magazine to remind you to pray. You can even write to Alvaro, Trinity and Anita to show them that you've been praying for them.

She says, "In my first days at the centre, I felt a great emptiness in my heart and so much pain. But here, I felt free.

"This place had a huge impact in my life. It was a very special help. I know that if I had not come here, my life out there would be completely different."

With time, Sofia was able to forgive the men who killed her parents, and understand that, despite everything she has been through, God still has a purpose for her life. "That purpose is that I could share with other people about God's love amid the circumstances," she says. "That experience taught me to have more trust in God. Now I understand that many things can happen to me and that He is always with me. He is my Father. I'm so happy to say that I believe in Him!"

▶ See for yourself Visit the Open Doors website to see a video update of Sofia.



GIVE TO PROVIDE PROTECTION, PROVISION AND AN EDUCATION

Every £15 could help a child to attend school for a week, free from being bullied for their faith.

Every £30 could help provide trauma care for a child who has been attacked for being from a Christian family.

Every £50 could keep an orphaned child in a secret children's home in one of the most violent countries in the world for a week.

Whatever you are able to give will make a real difference to a persecuted child. If you haven't already, will you consider setting up a regular, monthly gift? This will help us to support children like Wasihun and Sofia, not just this Christmas, but for as long as they need us.

Thank you for being family to the children of the persecuted church.

JOY TO THE WORLD!

How your support has changed lives in 2017

2017 has been a challenging year once again for our persecuted family. In January, the Open Doors World Watch List revealed that persecution against Christians had risen for the fourth consecutive year – meaning more Christians around the world are facing more persecution than ever before.

But in the face of this huge challenge, you have responded with a huge heart! Your support has helped provide emergency aid, theological and vocational training, microloans, trauma care, advocacy support – and with it, strength and hope for Christians who are under great pressure for their faith in Jesus. Without your prayers and gifts, Open Doors wouldn't be able to do the vital work that we do to support these precious believers. So, as a way of passing on their thanks to you, we've collected a few stories and messages from those who have had their year - and their lives - transformed by your support.

North Korea: Was it worth the risk?

"I am writing to you whose name and face I don't know, because I really want to say THANK YOU. I will always remember you and your loving support. I wish that one day I could meet you face-to-face." – A trafficked North Korean woman supported by Open Doors

Is following Jesus in North Korea worth the risk? That was the question we asked in January after North Korea once again came top of the Open Doors World Watch List as the most dangerous place in the world to live out the Christian faith.

Thanks to your support, Open Doors has continued to support the church in North Korea with emergency relief aid and Christian materials, and by providing training and training materials to North Korean believers in China.

"Your prayers and loving support are the North Korean believers' power source"

"Praise the Lord for His mercy and grace. Your prayers and loving support are the North Korean believers' power source," says an underground church leader. "Thanks to your materials we can keep our spiritual life strong and firm in Jesus Christ. We pray for you that our Father God may pour out His abundant blessings and overflowing love upon all our fellow warriors in Christ, both spiritually and physically. Blessings from North Korea!"

"Please know that your prayers have been answered," writes another Christian brother. "Yes, North Korea is still a very dark country and the people suffer day in, day out. Yes, there's a lot of extra tension because of North Korea's missile and nuclear tests. But you have to know that never before have I seen so many North Koreans come to faith as nowadays. The spiritual battle always intensifies when God is doing something amazing."

In 2017, every £41 helped provide emergency food, medicines and clothes for a North Korean family. Open Doors provided this vital relief aid to over 60,000 North Korean Christians in 2017, thanks to your support!



Trafficked North Korean women worshipping at a Bible study in China

Nigeria: Hope brought back to life

"I had become angry with God and decided I will not follow him anymore, but God being a compassionate Father sent you to remind me of his promises. He used you to wipe my tears away. May God bless you abundantly!" – James Abdu, food aid beneficiary

In the summer of 2017, famine aggravated by Boko Haram violence spread throughout northern Nigeria. Thanks to the amazing response to our Nigeria emergency appeal, Open Doors partners were able to respond immediately, providing lifesaving aid to 15,000 families. Here, believers say thank you.

"Since I lost my husband I have been living from hand to mouth, but still believing for a better tomorrow. And indeed, God used Open Doors to wipe my tears away," said Christian widow, Esther Clement. "Thank you for sacrificing your money to feed me and my family. May the Lord bless you abundantly!"

"Thank you for sacrificing your money to feed me and my family"

"I do not have anything at home and thought we would starve to death," shared another believer, Maman Vero. "But like He did for the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17), He provided for me and my children. May God continue to supply all the needs of those who gave towards this relief according to His riches in glory."

PRAYERS ANSWERED

In May, three years of prayers were answered when 81 Chibok schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram were freed! Amongst them was Grace, the eldest daughter of Peter Pogu, whose story was told in Open Doors' Magazine and the video Where is Grace? After months of rehabilitation therapy, the Nigerian government has announced that the girls will soon be going back to school! Please continue to pray for the 113 schoolgirls who remain in captivity. Your prayers are making a difference!

TRAUMA CARE CENTRE

Through your support, in 2017 Open Doors partners began building a Trauma Care Centre. Once complete, the centre will provide specialised trauma care and respite to believers who have faced violence and loss, as well as training for caregivers. Already, 12-year-old Martina, whose father was killed in sectarian violence in 2005, has benefitted from support at the Trauma Care Centre.

"Since the first day I came here for the Trauma Healing Programme, I felt at rest," she says. "I felt normal. I felt the heavy load lifted from my heart."

▶ **See for yourself** Watch a video of Martina's story of how art therapy helped her reach a place of healing at www.opendoorsuk.org

Every £30 helped provide two days of trauma care training for a church leader or lay leader to help them bring healing to others. With your help, over 300 church leaders were trained in 2017.



Open Doors partners were able to help 75,000 people with lifesaving food aid



Chibok girls worshipping after their release from Boko Haram



12-year-old Martina, pictured here at the site of the Trauma Centre, has been supported through Trauma Healing

India: Singled out but not forgotten

"I am so grateful that, through local people, Open Doors provided timely support and bailed me out." – Subhash, imprisoned for his faith in India

Christians in India are facing increasing levels of persecution, and back in July we told you the stories of several believers who had been singled out for their faith. Here, two believers share how your support has helped them this year.

Like many Indian Christians, Deepa* and her husband were expelled from their village when they converted from Hinduism to Christianity. "Then the people in our old village falsely testified to the police that my husband was a member of a militant Communist group, so he was locked up in prison," says Deepa. But through your prayers and gifts, Deepa was able to attend a tailoring centre where she has learned to make clothes, helping her to support her family.

"I have stitched outfits for myself and I have also started stitching for customers. I was continuously praying to God for wisdom. I know my prayers were answered as I was able to learn very quickly. I am so glad now because I can stitch professionally."

"I am so glad now because I can stitch professionally."

As well as strengthening persecuted believers through vocational training and livelihood projects, Open Doors partners also provide financial, medical and legal support for victims of violent persecution through Rapid Response teams. Christian convert, Subhash*, is just one of many believers who has been helped by one of these teams.

Subhash used to lead prayer meetings attended by over 1,500 people until Hindu extremists falsely accused him of numerous crimes. Despite being imprisoned, God used him both inside the prison and through his release, which was obtained by Open Doors partners.

"I shared the gospel with twelve other inmates. Eleven of them believed, so I taught them how to pray," he shares. "On the tenth day, the Lord gave me a vision that I would be released." Subhash told his inmates his vision, but they didn't believe it could be possible. "I told them to pray for their release also, and that God could release them, too, along with me." Amazingly, their prayers were answered! "I was released and so were my eleven other inmates who believed. I am so grateful that, through local people, Open Doors provided timely support and bailed me out."

**name changed for security reasons*

In 2017, every £21 resourced a Rapid Response team of volunteers for a month to provide food, medical care and legal assistance, as well as comfort and support, to persecuted believers. With your gifts, our partners in India have been able to fund 80 teams to run for a year.



Deepa was able to attend a tailoring centre thanks to your support*



Through help from local Open Doors partners Subhash was supported and bailed out of prison*

HOPE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST BEAUTY FOR ASHES

"I am happy with the first families living in Karamles... I think that before the schools start we will have a hundred houses repaired." – Church leader Thabet, Iraq

Throughout 2017, swathes of Iraq's Nineveh Plain were finally liberated from the so-called Islamic State (IS) after over two years of occupation. Thanks to your faithful giving and prayers, Open Doors partners have been helping displaced believers in Iraq and Syria to return home, providing short-term and long-term aid, and speaking out in advocacy.

Remember 12-year-old Noeh whose house in Karamles, Iraq, was destroyed? Since telling his story in September, his family have moved into his aunt's house in Karamles! His family is one of ten to move back to the village so far, but with your support Open Doors partners are helping believers to repair damaged homes, here and elsewhere.

In nearby Bashiqa, church leader Poulos is grateful: "The first 52 houses here have been restored with your support," he says. Open Doors partners here have also helped establish a Centre for Support and Encouragement where people can stay as they work on their homes. "We will now start with another 30 houses."

In the town of Qaraqosh, around 1,500 families have returned home with the support of the local church. But there is much to do: here alone, 4,774 houses are in a state where they can be repaired, and back in Karamles, church leader Thabet has already received requests from around 250 families for housing funds. But your gifts are making it possible for many of these families to return.

"You make us feel that we are loved by God"

As well as building projects, your support has also helped both Iraqi and Syrian believers with emergency aid, trauma care, microloans, Christian resources, training and employment.

In Aleppo, Syria, one project partner said: "We thank you for the help you give during the crisis, to ease our suffering and pain. You make us feel that we are loved by God." And another wrote, "With your continuous care and help, we do our best to support vulnerable families of our congregation to survive despite all the problems and disappointments they face."

Every gift you gave provided the funds to either repair a damaged house or restore livelihoods in Iraq and Syria. So far, the houses of over 52 families have been restored, 30 more houses have been started and over 4,500 are in the pipeline. Thank you!



LAST CHANCE TO SIGN AND SHARE THE PETITION DEADLINE 4 DECEMBER

Time is running out to add your voice to the global *Hope for the Middle East* petition which Open Doors will deliver to the UN on 11 December and to the UK on 13 December.

At the time of writing, over 500,000 people from 142 countries have signed the petition. If you haven't already done so, please sign the petition enclosed with this magazine and share it with as many people as you can. You can also order our free all age service pack, *Rebuild Hope*, to help you share the campaign with your church. You have until 4 December!

Let's celebrate the voices of our brothers and sisters being heard! On 13 December, we will be orchestrating a public action in London to support the petition presentation. We'd love to see you there!

Or, if you'd prefer to celebrate closer to home, join us on 13 December by ringing out your church bells – just as the churches in Iraq did after they were liberated – and share videos of your celebrations on social media.

Email us at advocacy@opendoorsuk.org for more info on the public action and bell ringing.

THANK YOU!

Thank you for your faithful support for our persecuted family in 2017. Your prayers and gifts, your letters and petition signatures are truly keeping hope alive for tens of thousands of believers around the world.

As we look ahead to the new year with all the new challenges and opportunities it holds for the persecuted church, we pray that you will continue to walk with your persecuted family, knowing that your support makes a real difference. If you are able, please consider committing to pray and give to support your persecuted family on a regular basis. This will enable us to provide persecuted believers with long-term support and to walk alongside them not just for today, or tomorrow, but for as long as they need us.

21 EGYPT



Leader:
President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

Population:
95.2 million
(9.5 million Christians)

Main religion:
Islam

Government:
Republic

Source of persecution:
Islamic extremism



A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

It's been a grim year for Egypt's Christians – marked by violent attacks on Coptic Christians and intense pressure on Muslim-background believers. Although the Muslim Brotherhood were evicted from power in 2013, the influence of strict Muslims and radical Islamists continues to put Christians at serious risk.

In February 2017, an Egyptian Islamic State affiliate posted a video message, vowing to 'eliminate' Egypt's Christians and to 'liberate Cairo'. In the same month, Nabila Fawzi Hannah, a Coptic Christian in North Sinai, saw her son and husband killed at home in front of her, only to witness the gunman calmly ticking off their names from his hit-list. The next day, she and her daughter took the coffins and joined a convoy of Christian families fleeing the area.



Damage inflicted on St Peter's and St Paul's Church, Cairo

A LITANY OF VIOLENCE IN 2017

On 11 December 2016, a suicide bomber linked to an Islamic extremist organisation entered St Peter's and St Paul's church in Cairo and killed 25 people. Such groups seem able to operate with impunity. Attacks continue unabated in 2017.

- Jan:** Five Coptic Christians killed in two weeks
- Feb:** More than 100 families flee attacks in North Sinai - seven killed
- Mar:** Police accused of complicity in kidnap of Christian woman
- Apr:** 49 people die in Palm Sunday church bombings
- May:** 29 Christians shot dead in Ascension Day bus attack
- Jun:** Christian soldier beaten to death by Al-Salaam forces
- Jul:** Violent killing of Christian woman in Cairo
- Aug:** Coptic woman stabbed after leaving Alexandria church
- Sep:** Abduction of Coptic girls at all-time high
- Oct:** Baby copt viciously murdered

These headlines tell only a part of the story. That's because the greatest driver of persecution is in the home. New believers from a Muslim background, face enormous pressure from families to renounce their Christian faith, often being beaten or kicked out of the house. Christians also face discrimination from the secular

government – despite making up 10 per cent of Egypt's population. Incidents like these don't make the national news, but are meticulously recorded by the Open Doors World Watch team as they compile the Open Doors World Watch List.

Open Doors doesn't only document the level of persecution. It works in partnership with local churches and other ministries to strengthen the church in Egypt.

As well as supporting victims of attacks with medical care and spiritual encouragement, marginalised believers are empowered through biblical training and discipleship groups. Rural Christian women, for instance, are disrespected by society because of their faith and gender. To combat this, project worker Amany brings them together to learn to read, write and grow in faith. "I want them to know they are so precious, valuable, created uniquely by God, loved and so crucial for the advancement of the kingdom of God in Egypt. They tell us it is life-changing."



Christian woman sharing life with her discipleship group

"God is using me to spread his peace and love among the neighbours."

One participant confirms this: "Even though I go to church regularly, I feel the group meeting has changed me a lot. For instance, on the street where I live, when kids used to fight with one another, you would easily find the mothers getting heated up to fight together to defend their kids. But after I joined the group, I stopped behaving like the other women. God is using me to spread his peace and love among the neighbours."

"Another wonderful thing happening," says Amany, "is that we are now being invited by Muslim women to teach them how to read and write – this is an amazing opportunity to share God's love and compassion."

▶ See for yourself:

You can see how women in Egypt are being strengthened through literacy and Bible groups by going to www.opendoors.org.uk/egypt

▶ PRAY

- Thanking God for the positive effect of the women's discipleship groups
- That the Egyptian church will be strengthened to share the love of Christ
- For justice to be upheld in the courts and on the streets.

INVITE YOUR MP TO THE LAUNCH OF THE 2018 WORLD WATCH LIST

The Open Doors World Watch List annual launch in January has had an enormous impact on our own Parliament. We've seen hundreds of MPs attending – simply because you have invited them.

"The launch of the Open Doors World Watch List is an increasingly important event in the Parliamentary calendar," says the Rt Hon Theresa Villiers MP. "It gives MPs the chance to show their support and solidarity with Christians under attack in the Middle East, North Africa and other parts of the world."

Please fill in the postcard enclosed with your magazine and send it to your MP or to the Open Doors office by 10 January 2018.



YOUR LOVE

CHRISTMAS

THEIR HOPE



Could you give children who are bullied, attacked and orphaned the gift of hope this Christmas?

This is Trinity. She was badly burnt by a petrol bomb, thrown by an Islamic extremist, as she played outside her church.

Wasihun was seven when his father was killed for his faith in Jesus, leaving Wasihun without his father's support and love.

This is what happens to children who face persecution – they frequently pay the price for their family's faith.

But the prayers and gifts of their global church family enable Open Doors to support children like Trinity and Wasihun for as long as they need us. Open Doors' underground networks allow us to reach children in some of the most dangerous

places in the world with vital aid, protection, education and care - but this is only possible with your help.

Every £30 could help provide trauma care to a child who has been attacked for being from a Christian family.

Every £50 could provide care for an orphaned child in a secret children's home in one of the most violent countries in the world for a week.

Will you be family to a persecuted child today? Pray, send a message of encouragement and give a Christmas gift. Use the enclosed response form, call 01993 460015 or search 'Open Doors Christmas'.



OpenDoors