

OPEN DOORS

MAGAZINE



India

Propaganda, Persecution, Pandemic

2021 | Issue 3

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but now I do not fear"

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2 CORINTHIANS 4:8-12

We are hard pressed on every side,
BUT NOT CRUSHED
perplexed, BUT NOT IN DESPAIR
persecuted, BUT NOT ABANDONED
struck down, BUT NOT DESTROYED

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body.

So then, death is at work in us

BUT LIFE IS AT WORK IN YOU

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Keeping the Church Alive

Persecution is rising rapidly in India driven by the Hindu extremists' goal of ridding the country of all non-Hindus by the end of 2021.

Extremists are highly organized and do not shy away from using extensive violence to achieve this goal. They use propaganda to stir up this violence and discrimination and lobby for changes in official policies to restrict the freedom of the church. These propaganda go unchecked and at times are further spread by media outlets, creating a culture of intolerance that results in greater persecution.

We have heard countless stories of Christians being killed. Christian women and girls, raped and sexually abused. Christians are attacked, ostracized and unjustly accused of forcefully converting others. Christians are victims of hate speech and smear campaigns that incite violence and discrimination. Peaceful religious gatherings of Christians are disrupted by mobs and attacks. Christian being excluded from government aid. All these because of their faith.

Sadly, Covid has only made the situation worse. People are more vulnerable because they're stuck in their villages without a means of escape. It's much more difficult for them to access wider community support or to get a job, and Christians were often neglected in official aid efforts. Imagine what it's like to be trapped and helpless?

And yet through all these, the Lord's work continues. His glory shines through the darkness. Hope is never abandoned for Christians in India for the victory belongs to the Lord!

As the apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 4:8-12: We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed...

In this magazine issue, be inspired by stories of faith, get a glimpse of what is happening in the lives of Christians in India that we do not often hear in the mainstream media. And join us as we #StandforTruthIndia for our Indian brothers and sisters in the Lord.

STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED



Preetha was beaten for her faith, then refused hospital treatment because she's a Christian. Your support saved her life.*

Violent persecution has continued in India despite the Covid pandemic. Extremists have made it their goal to wipe out Christians in India by the end of 2021, using lies to stir up hatred and violence. India's Christians need their worldwide family of faith more than ever before.

'If not for God, we would be dead,' says Vinita*, remembering the day a gang of men barged into her home armed with metal rods.

The church pastor and his wife had come to pray with Vinita, her sister and baby daughter. But the extremists, stinking of alcohol, could not tolerate a prayer meeting in their community. They began smashing everything in sight – even beating the praying Christians.

"When we were admitted to the hospital we could not receive treatment, because there was pressure from the attackers."

"While they were beating me, I was holding my six-month-old daughter in my arms. They snatched her and threw her down," Vinita says. "I felt that today we would not be spared."

'My pastor's wife would have died'

Thankfully, the baby escaped with just a few scratches on her legs. All the adults survived, but sustained serious injuries – and needed hospital treatment.



Extremists invaded Vinita's home and attacked her family and friends, aiming to drive out Christianity from India.*

Yet when they reached hospital, the Christians were denied treatment.

Vinita explains, "When we were admitted to the hospital we could not receive treatment, because there was pressure from the attackers."

The extremists had already tried to kill the Christians with fists and rods – and now they were preventing them from receiving life-saving treatment. The pastor's wife, Preetha*, was in the most critical condition. Vinita prayed desperately for her.

"I prayed, 'Father, you alone show your power and heal us.'"

God answered Vinita's prayers – but not in the way she expected. "Partners from Open Doors came forward to help us. They took us to another hospital and got us treated and paid our hospital expenses."

It was your prayers and support that made this possible – and it saved Preetha's life. "If the partners did not help, my pastor's wife would have died," says Vinita.

Pastor Samuel, an Open Doors partner in India, fears the triple threats of propaganda, persecution and the pandemic may destroy the church in India. Yet his faith is strong as he calls on the worldwide church for support.*

"We have to act now. The situation here is so bad, that THIS MAY BE THE LAST TIME WE ARE ABLE TO SPEAK UP FOR OUR COUNTRY."

Violence and discrimination during Covid

The attack on Vinita and her friends is not an isolated case. Open Doors local partners hoped that the Covid pandemic would lead to fewer attacks on Christians. But violent persecution has continued, even increasing in remote communities where Christians are more vulnerable.

Alongside violent attacks, many more Christians in India also experience discrimination – and this can be just as deadly. Thousands of believers were denied food aid during the Covid-19 lockdowns because of their faith, and would have starved to death without help from Open Doors local partners.

Last year, partners were able to reach 126,000 vulnerable believers in India with life-saving aid – thanks to the incredible generosity and prayers of Open Doors supporters like you.

Change the story

Open Doors has a vision to strengthen the

church to survive the fiercest persecution and the devastation of the Covid pandemic, to remain salt and light.

This is why your continued prayers and gifts are so vital, providing life-saving food, as well as long-term support. For Vinita, that means helping her to file a case against her attackers, and look for a safer place to live. For others, that could mean support to start a small business, legal training, or regular prayer and encouragement that they are not alone or forgotten.

India's Christians also need their worldwide family to speak up for them, to challenge the narrative of hate and lies, and to stand for truth on their behalf.

Pastor Samuel*, an Open Doors local partner, says, "My dear brothers and sisters, we have to act now. The situation here is so bad, that this may be the last time we are able to speak up for our country."

*Names changed for security reasons.

The church in India is struck down, but not destroyed

IT'S TIME TO ACT!

PLEASE PRAY

Vinita says, "Pray for my whole family that we may be safe. Pray that the threats will stop. I pray that the attackers have a change of heart. Pray for us to be strong in faith, to be fearless."

Pray that God will give wisdom and energy to Open Doors local partners as they serve our persecuted church family.

Pray that the courageous witness of believers in India will help to expose the lies of the extremists, and show that Christians are proud to be Indian and want to be a blessing to their nation.

PLEASE GIVE

If you are able, please consider making a donation – or committing to support the persecuted church through a regular monthly gift.

Every \$155 provides urgent relief aid to a victim of violence or a believer who has lost their livelihood through the pandemic.

Every \$550 trains a leader to run persecution survival workshops.

Every \$2,300 helps a believer who has lost their livelihood to start up a small business.

STAND FOR TRUTH

Visit www.opendoors.org.hk for more ways to stand up for our family in India.

- Watch and share the moving film of Vinita's testimony.
- Read and share the shocking report by the London School of Economics into how extremists are using lies and propaganda to stir up violence.
- Share the social media film series and hashtag: #StandforTruthIndia



EXPOSING THE LIES

Extremists believe they can wipe out Christianity and other religions. They are using propaganda and lies to stir up hatred and violence.

WHAT HINDU EXTREMISTS SAY ABOUT CHRISTIANS	THE TRUTH
India is a Hindu state – Christians. don't belong there.	The Indian Constitution recognizes in Article 25 that "all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion." Christians in India have a constitutional right to practice their faith.
Christianity is a foreign religion.	Christianity has been present in India for many centuries. Christian tradition states that Christianity arrived through Thomas, one of Christ's 12 disciples, in the first century.
Indians are not allowed to convert to any religion apart from Hinduism.	While some of India's states do have anti-conversion laws, they have been designed to prevent religious conversions that are not voluntary in nature, and so carried out by 'forcible' or 'fraudulent' means or by 'allurement' or 'inducement'. There is no law that prevents someone from changing their religion voluntarily, in fact, the Indian Supreme Court has said the Indian Constitution protects the freedom to convert voluntarily.
Providing food and material support is a means of forcibly converting vulnerable Hindu populations and must be stopped at all costs.	The Bible commands us to love our neighbor, care for the downtrodden, the widow and the orphan. By providing for those in need Christians are showing our care for India and those in need.

Forced conversions to Christianity are on the rise; the poor and feeble are easily deceived through free education, food, and humanitarian methods and unable to protect themselves and thus the Indian Government must protect those vulnerable in the Hindu faith by passing anti-conversion laws.

Anti-conversion laws are abused to limit Christians from practicing their religion peacefully and create an environment that promotes discrimination and violence. Between 2014-2018, that the 8 states that had anti-conversion laws accounted for more incidents of violence against Christians than all of the other 21 states combined.

Indian people who become Christians are no longer Indian – all true Indians are Hindus.

This is an idea that has been promoted by Hindu extremists who believe in an ideology called 'Hindutva'. This is the idea that India should be purified to include only those who are able to call India both their father land and their holy land. Under this theology, Indic religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism are considered 'Hindutva'. Indian Christians (and Muslims) are accused of having allegiances that lie outside India. But Indian Christians don't see themselves as any less Indian because of their faith, and many work to serve their communities and Indian society.

There will be no Christians left in India by the end of 2021.

A leader of a large Hindu extremist group has stated that this is their goal. While many Christians have faced discrimination, violence, and some have even faced death because of their faith, the courage of our Indian brothers and sisters shows that the church will not be destroyed. Your prayer and support are helping the church to survive in the face of the fiercest persecution.



Read and share the report. Open Doors has partnered with the London School of Economics to produce a report that exposes the way disinformation and propaganda are being used against Christians and other religious minorities in India. Download your copy at www.opendoors.org/hk/indiaincrisis.

Participate on social media. Share the film series and use the hashtag: #StandforTruthIndia



Orphaned at the age of 15 Sitara (pseudonym) has faced a lot of challenges in life because of her Christian faith. Open Doors partners got in touch with her 2 years ago and have been helping her and her siblings ever since.



***“I am still persecuted,
but now I do not fear”***

***Your prayers and support are
sustaining Kirti* during the pandemic***

When Kirti’s husband was murdered because he chose to follow Jesus. Open Doors partners supported Kirti with food, shelter and money to pay for hospital bills. Now thanks to your continued prayers and support, they have been able to come alongside her during the pandemic as well.

Sadly, during lockdown, Kirti’s persecutors did not stop. Several villagers came to her farm while she was away and fed her crops to their animals; this made it hard for Kirti to make ends meet. “I was not in my village when they were grazing animals in my farm,” she says. “I felt very sad when I came back and saw my farm. I did not say anything to anyone, but I prayed to God that the Lord would change the lives of those persecutors so that they too can be saved.”

She and other Christians in her village were also denied food aid from the government because of their faith. “Sometimes I get frustrated because I have the responsibility of my in-laws and four children. Still, I thank God that He helps us in everything,” she says.

“God is with me and God fulfilled all my needs.”

Thanks to you, Open Doors local partners have been able to continue supporting Kirti. “The organisation has helped me a lot,” she says. “They made a home for us, gave us clothes, utensils and rations... In time, God fulfilled our every need. I did not face any kind of problem during lockdown. God is with me and



Thanks to your prayers, Kirti remains faithful to Jesus and is seeing miraculous healings in her village.

God fulfilled all my needs.”

Many come for prayer and healing

God is also answering Kirti’s prayers for her family and community. Her father-in-law, who used to persecute her and blame her for her husband’s death, has recently become a Christian. Also, many people in her village have come to her for prayer for healing – and as a result, around 10 new families have started believing in Jesus! She says, “I am illiterate, but whatever I hear from the Bible, I share with others... I am still persecuted by some people from my village, but now I do not fear. God is with me.”

Kirti has written a prayer – you might like to pray with her:

Life-giving God, I thank You and pray for all those people who supported me in my difficult times; bless all of them, meet all their needs. I pray for those people facing persecution for being Christians. Lord, give them courage. May Your church grow in every country, that many people – including those who persecute and oppose Christians – may be saved. I pray for the servants of God who share Your Word; keep them safe and fulfil all their needs. Help all of us to live life according to the Word of God. Amen.

**Name changed for security reasons*

COVID CRISIS UPDATE

This report is from Aman*, an Open Doors local partner in India working with vulnerable Christian communities.

Our Christian brothers and sisters in India are already facing extreme persecution. Now they're facing the pandemic – the effects of which are even worse, because of the discrimination and poverty they face every day.

USHA'S STORY OF SURVIVAL

Usha* was refused government aid during the Covid-19 lockdowns, because of her faith. This happened to many believers. There were no such directives from the government, but this was practised at the local level by people who had the authority to distribute food. Everyone was taunting Usha, saying, "Your God is not helping you, but if you renounce your faith then we will help you."

But God DID help Usha – thanks to your gifts and prayers.

**Name changed for security reasons*

"Thank you Jesus for sending Your people to our aid and giving us provision miraculously."

USHA

"The people we meet – like Usha – are discouraged and anxious regarding the pandemic situation, but they are looking to the Lord for answers. When we reach them with help, that helps their faith. They are very happy and are praising God and thanking us again and again."

Aman, Open Doors local partner in India

Your support and prayers are vital for believers like Usha – providing not just food but legal aid and long-term training. Thank you.

STRUCK DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED...

The church in India is struck down, but not destroyed. IT'S TIME TO ACT!

Vinita (pseudonym) was attacked at home for being a Christian. She was brutally beaten, her baby thrown to the floor. But when she got to hospital, she was refused treatment – because of her faith in Jesus.

She says, “If not for God, we would be dead.”

Vinita’s friend, her pastor’s wife, was so badly injured she would have died if Open Doors partners had not provided medical help.

It seems unthinkable in the world’s largest democracy. Yet Hindu extremists have set out to destroy the church in India, using lies to stir up hatred.

Their violence didn’t stop for the pandemic. But when the pandemic stops, will the church have survived?

Your support could help the church survive – against violence, persecution and loss of livelihood through Covid.

Every HK\$155 provides urgent relief aid to a victim of violence or a believer who has lost their livelihood through the pandemic.

Every HK\$550 trains a leader to run persecution survival workshops.

Every HK\$2,300 helps a believer who has lost their livelihood to start up a small business.

Please act today:
www.opendoors.org.hk

Thank You!

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