

OPEN DOORS

MAGAZINE



Believers in the Middle East

A future of despair... or hope?

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**The poor and the homeless
won't always be forgotten
and without hope.**

PSALM 9:18 (CEV)

Alex's Corner



**“May there be
peace within
your walls and
security within
your citadels”**

PSALM 122:7

Hope and Security

Imagine somebody you know who's in their 20s. What are the things they hope for in their future? The answers would differ for each of them. Some have particular careers they hope to follow or communities they want to be part of. What all of them want – and many can take for granted – is freedom, safety, and security.

Young Christians in North Africa and the Middle East long for exactly the same things. But, for them, freedom, safety, and security are often unattainable. They don't have opportunities, the economic situation is desperate, and they face persecution and opposition every day because of their faith. Sometimes that is a violent attack – more often, as with Baher* in Egypt (p4), it's the daily grind of discrimination.

When local Open Doors partners speak to young people in North Africa and the Middle East, they often say two things. Firstly, that they want to leave the region. They see other countries as offering the hope that is missing at home. And, secondly, that they feel forgotten by the worldwide church.

Today, we have the opportunity to show our young brothers and sisters that we haven't forgotten them. We can help give them reasons to stay in the countries they love, and hope for the future. These courageous young Christians need that. And the church in North Africa and the Middle East needs it – without young people, the future of the church in this region is under threat.

It's crucial to help Christians stay in the Middle East! Together, we can help the church raise up leaders passionate for God, eagerly pursuing justice, and filled with hope that lasts.

Every blessing,

Alex Kan

Church Relations Officer
Open Doors Hong Kong

**Name changed for security reasons*

A FUTURE OF
DESOLATION

OR HOPE?

Young Christians in Egypt are being worn down by relentless persecution. Rejected, despised and limited. Their faith – and the future of the church – is under threat.

“I hated myself and I hated God. I blamed God. Why did he choose me to go through agony?”

Baher’s* words are full of bitterness. His fury and venom towards God is alarming. But this is what grinding, relentless persecution can do to someone’s faith.

“I lost all hope in life.”

All his life, this young Egyptian struggled against oppression, and his faith was chipped away year after year – until it reached breaking point.

Young believers across Upper Egypt, endure constant discrimination, humiliation and rejection. Girls are harassed in the street, children are bullied in school, and employment options are so limited that Christians are driven into the most dangerous, low-paid occupations. The devastating economic crisis gripping Egypt only compounds the misery and hardship.

The picture is reflected across most of the Middle East too, where persecution is robbing young people of hope and purpose. The faith of a generation is at risk of being crushed by persecution – and if that happens, the future of the church in the region looks desolate.

Life-changing injury

Baher’s story begins when he was just 13. He left school to find work because the family were desperately poor. Like so many other Christians, discrimination

meant he was forced to take on a hazardous job in one of Upper Egypt’s limestone quarries. There’s no legal protection for workers’ rights, and no health insurance.

“Strengthen what remains and is about to die.”

REVELATION 3:2

Baher would never have chosen to work in the quarry, were it not for persecution. “We operate machinery with blades that can shred a body to pieces,” he said. “It’s common for quarry workers to lose a limb. That’s in addition to the huge danger of electrical shocks due to exposed power cords, and the dust particles which cause lung damage and eye disease.”

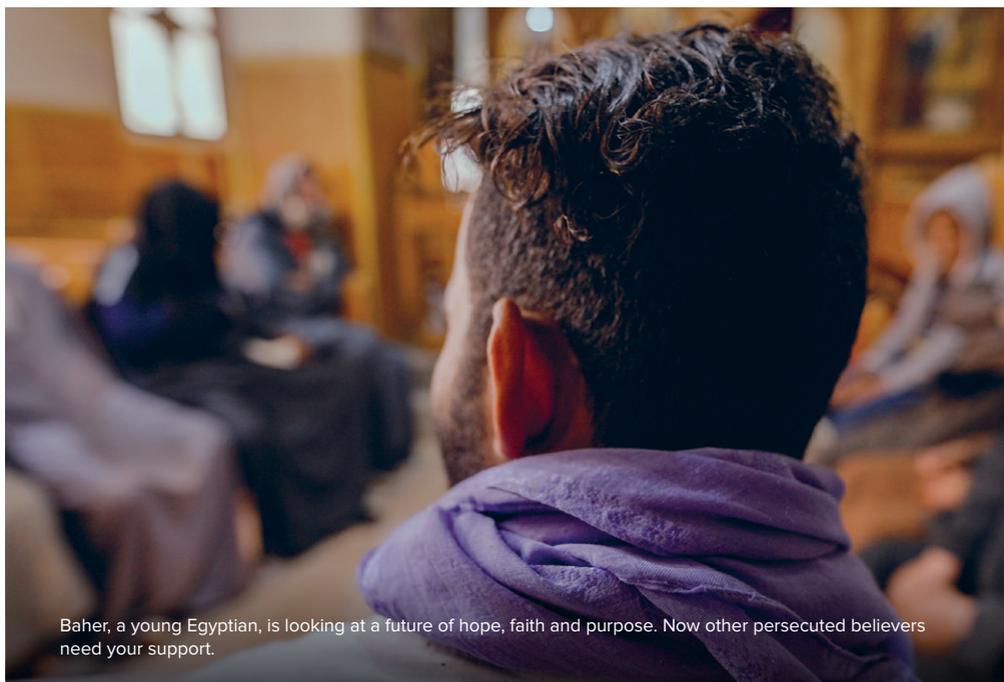
Within a week, Baher’s arm was severed in a horrible accident.

“I blamed God because I did not do anything wrong, I just wanted to help my family!” cried Baher. “Whenever I looked at my one arm, I was depressed.”

Then, tragically, Baher’s brother died in the job too, thought to have choked to death on dust from the stone-cutting machines. Baher has tears in his eyes as he remembers, “When my brother died, my heart was torn apart and I lost all hope in life.”

Shaken faith

Persecution not only robbed Baher of life and hope, it shook his faith to the core. Alongside his trauma, Baher saw the homes of Christian families in his village looted and burned. He knew Christian parents who were afraid to let their daughters out for fear they’d be kidnapped by radical Muslims. He was rejected as he sought other work.



Baher, a young Egyptian, is looking at a future of hope, faith and purpose. Now other persecuted believers need your support.

“Where is God in my life?” Baher raged. “Why has he forsaken me? Why has he chosen me to suffer such pain and become disabled?”

Rewrite futures

Baher’s future appeared desolate – but he also had another future, one of hope and purpose. It just needed someone like you to take him there.

“We stopped blaming God, and worship him instead.”

Thanks to your support, Baher is among hundreds of quarry workers who have received vital help from Open Doors’ partners. A micro-loan helped Baher launch a new sheep-breeding business, and he enrolled in a discipleship programme to rebuild his faith.

“I was blaming God for the traumas

my family had been through, but you supported us and helped us get over it,” said Baher. “Now we are thankful. If you had not backed me, I would not have changed. You lifted my morale and restored my relationship with God.”

At Open Doors, we’re driven by the words of Revelation 3:2, “Strengthen what remains and is about to die.” Your support is urgently needed to encourage the faith of other persecuted Christians like Baher, still working in perilous conditions in the stone quarries. You can help provide them with practical support to remain in their homeland and keep the church alive.

Because when you give and pray, you rewrite the future for young Christians. You strengthen what remains. As Baher puts it, “We stopped blaming God, and we worship him instead.”

**name changed for security reasons*

Will you rewrite the future for persecuted young Christians in Egypt?

PLEASE PRAY

- For Baher as he looks forward to a future of hope, faith and purpose
- For persecuted young believers in Egypt, and especially vulnerable quarry workers.
- For the church in Egypt and the Middle East, that it can withstand relentless persecution.

PLEASE GIVE

Every HK\$330 could provide a month of medical care and support to three persecuted Christians.

Every HK\$580 could train and disciple vulnerable young quarry workers, to strengthen their faith.

Every HK\$850 could give financial security to a persecuted Christian family, through a small business loan.





YOUR IMPACT

You're making hope last: thank you.

For seven years, you supported Hope for the Middle East, a global Open Doors campaign. Today, your gifts and prayers are healing and restoring thousands of persecuted believers.

Thanks to your support, Jubran (above) and Bishop Daniel (right) opened a Centre of Hope in Iraq, which helps 500 people a year.

A group of men huddle together, heads bowed, gently weeping.

It's an unusual sight for Iraq. After all, men here don't cry, generally. But this is a trauma healing group at the Pool of Siloam Ecumenical Centre, an Open Doors Centre of Hope – and these men take their lead from Jesus.

“Jesus cried when he lost his friend,” says 28-year-old Jubran who set up and now runs the Centre. “So it's ok to cry. We've had so many wars, my whole life there was war and civil war. People should express their feelings, and we cry with them.”

“Jesus cried... it's ok to cry.”

Jubran and Bishop Mar Chimon Daniel, now 32, established this Centre of Hope back in 2019 as part of Open Doors' seven-year Hope for the Middle East campaign. The aim was to see the church in the Middle East restored as a beacon of hope for communities, nations and the region.

Your support made it happen.

Today, around 80% of churches in Iraq (150) and more than half of churches in Syria (287) are now Centres of Hope. They primarily offer trauma healing, but also provide spiritual support, education and vocational training within local communities.

More than 200,000 people have been reached – and lives are being changed.

“Our main goal is to bring the healing message of the Bible,” said Jubran, who ministers to around 500 people a year. “From the Bible we learn how to deal with our pain and live in peace. Every day, I see the results of our work in people's lives and in our staff. People have changed for the better!”

Your prayers, too, had an impact. By December 2022, following a three-month campaign to unite the world in prayer for the Middle East, more than 105,000 prayers had been offered in 184 countries.

“We will not forget who supported us.”

This overwhelming support from the global church sent a powerful message of love and unity to our persecuted brothers and sisters. Bishop Daniel, who helped establish the Centre of Hope with Jubran, said, “Thank you for the help you have given us. With you, we can accomplish programmes essential for our community. I always say, we might forget the people who persecuted us, but we will not forget who supported us.”



PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for Jubran and Bishop Daniel, young Christian leaders, who remain in Iraq to build a strong and faithful church.
- Pray for healing among Middle East believers traumatised by persecution, violence and loss.
- Give thanks for Hope for the Middle East, and all that we have achieved together.





When asked what Christians around the world should pray for him, Jubran says, ***“That God will give me and others the power to help. That He will give us patience and love, so that we can give love to the people.”***

Hope for the Middle East

For each person who participated in the seven-year Hope for the Middle East campaign, Thank You. You have brought hope amid despair, and light in darkness.



"We might forget the people who persecuted us, but we will not forget who supported us."

BISHOP DANIEL



Why Anna is leaving a legacy for the persecuted church

You probably have people in your life who have inspired you and your faith. Perhaps someone who first told you about Jesus, or who taught you something valuable that you've carried through life – either with their words or by their example. For Anna*, an Open Doors supporter for many years, there were three people who deepened her understanding of generosity and giving.

"My early inspiration came from three people, my father, my godfather and my aunt," she says. "My upbringing made me aware of the principle of giving. Then, when I became a Christian in my teens, we were taught that you only start to give when you have got rid of your tithe - tithing first, and then being as generous as you can be afterwards."

God loves a cheerful giver

As a new Christian, Anna would tithe money from her student grant and wages from her work at the local swimming baths – encouraged also by the words of 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your

heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." At various times in the past, this included giving free lodgings in the family home to people at difficult times in their life.

As Anna grew older, giving sometimes came with sacrifice. "During my life, there have been times when I have found it hard to make ends meet," she remembers. These difficult times in her life, and stories of her father on the run from Nazi persecution, helped deepen a long-held compassion for people who are suffering. It was around this time that she first became aware of the suffering of the persecuted church.

"I'd always heard stories of persecution," she says. "My own father was a refugee, a member of the persecuted Confessing Church, who lost his parents at Auschwitz. I knew about losing everything, including loved ones, and being on the run, and being a stranger. But I didn't know the extent of what people are suffering just for being

Christians today.” This connection to the suffering of fellow believers across the world gradually took root in her. Over time, Anna learned more and more about the persecuted church from the Open Doors website and publications, starting to see the enormity of the situation more and more, and to notice where the plight of refugees was in the news.

Continuing her legacy

More recently, Anna deepened her connection with the persecuted church – partly from the church to which she belongs, where some of the worshippers are refugees who have experienced and witnessed persecution first-hand. She committed to the work of Open Doors in standing with Christians who risk everything to follow Jesus. After praying and listening to God, Anna decided to leave a legacy to the work of Open Doors in her will. “I want to ensure that those in the wider church community – particularly the persecuted Christians – can be supported,” she says. Thanks to her decision, she can ensure that she is standing alongside her persecuted church family for many years to come.

For Anna, leaving a gift in her will is a way to pass on the legacy of the people – like her father, godfather and aunt – who helped inspire and guide her own walk with Christ. Today, that’s a decision you can make too.

**Anna is a pseudonym, as this Open Doors supporter preferred to remain anonymous*

PLEASE PRAY

Father God, I pray that all gifts left to the work of Open Doors would strengthen the persecuted church - giving them encouragement and hope, and equipping them to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Please give wisdom to Open Doors partners as they steward these gifts, and direct their hands and feet as they serve the persecuted church.

LEAVING A LEGACY

You can give your persecuted family hope of a brighter future by including Open Doors as one of the beneficiaries in your Will. It won’t cost you anything right away but it means a lifetime of support for those who will suffer for following Jesus.

You can write your Will with our partner, Forever Gift, at no cost to you.

Find out more:
www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/leavelegacy/



“I want to ensure that those in the wider church community – particularly the persecuted Christians – can be supported.”

- ANNA -



God uses problems and persecution to inspect you

“When you have many kinds of troubles, you should be full of joy, because you know that these troubles test your faith, and this will give you patience.”

JAMES 1:2-3 NCV

God uses problems and persecution to INSPECT you. An African Christian businessman shares this testimony:

Born in a rich family I was living for earning big money. My businesses were very profitable. All over town people knew me. When God revealed to me the insignificance of money and richness, I accepted Christ after a long struggle. He changed my life. No longer was I running after money but I started sharing what God had done in my life.

After some time, suddenly the police came to our house. Officers carrying guns took me to their office to interrogate me, asking me all kinds of questions, treating me as if I was a criminal. The next day the same thing happened. A lot of soldiers entered my home and stood in every room making my children cry. For over a period of six months they threatened me. Day after day they asked me and threatened me to stop sharing the good news, the

gospel of Jesus Christ. Every time I responded saying: “No, I am not going to stop sharing about the life I received through Jesus Christ”

After six months they stopped. One man of the security forces told me, “The reason we could not do anything to you is because we couldn’t find any lie in your life.”

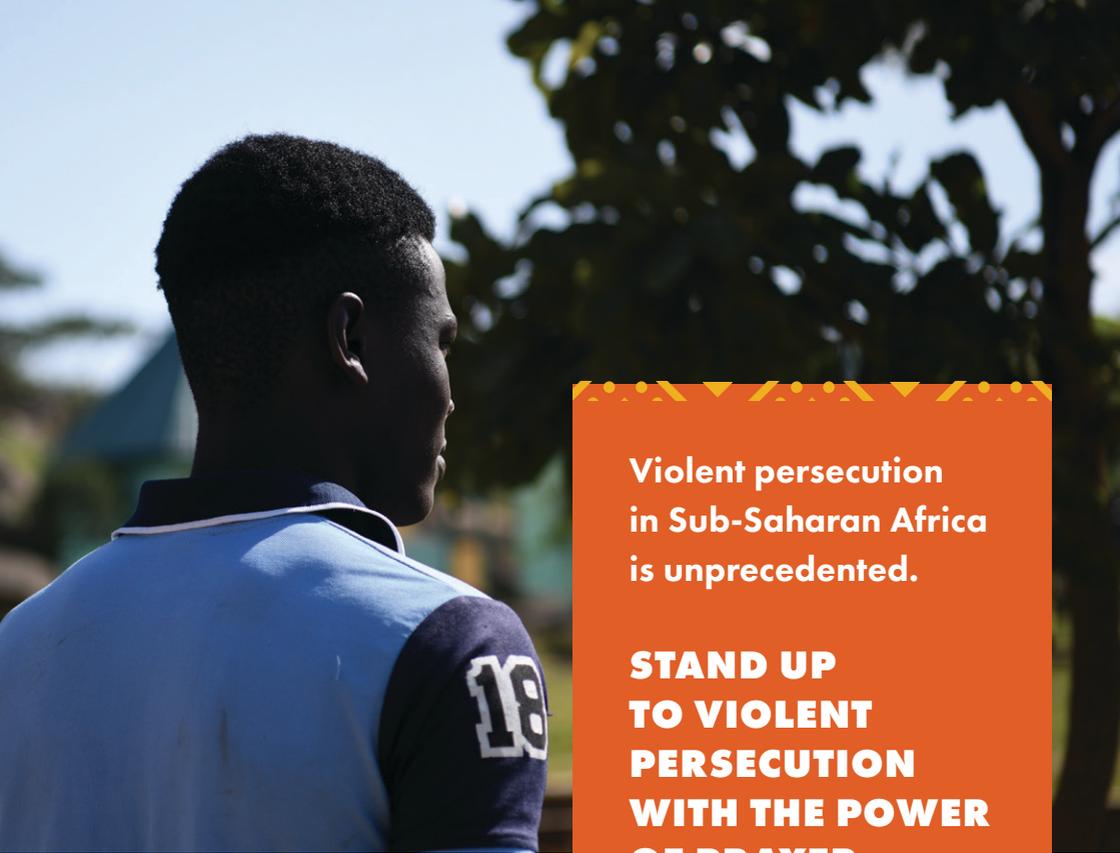
A year later, I saw on television the whole group of security men that had intimidated my family and me. They were shivering with fear in front of a judge. The government had changed and those people had to appear before the court because of things they had done. It was as if God told me, “This is what happens with those that oppose you, when you share My words.”

People are like tea bags...if you want to know what's inside them, just drop them into hot water! Has God ever tested your faith with a problem? What do problems reveal about you?

RESPONSE: God is at work in my life—even when I do not recognize it or understand it. It is much easier and more profitable when I cooperate with Him. This is the way to victory!

PRAYER: God may I be found faithful to You through every test.

Taken from the book: Daily Inspiration From The Lion's Den



Violent persecution
in Sub-Saharan Africa
is unprecedented.

**STAND UP
TO VIOLENT
PERSECUTION
WITH THE POWER
OF PRAYER.**

Ayuba*, in Nigeria, was devastated when his father was murdered by Boko Haram. Then Ayuba received a note from the extremists. *He was next on the hit list.*

**We must stand with Christians
like Ayuba in prayer.**

**name changed for security reasons*

**Join the International
Day of Prayer for the
Persecuted Church 2023**

05/11/2023

To find out more, visit www.opendoors.org.hk/idop or contact enquiryhk@od.org



The future looks desolate for Baher's generation Unless we act

Egypt's young Christians are being worn down by relentless persecution.

Baher (pseudonym) left school at 13 to work in a quarry, after persecution left his family desperately poor. Robbed of options because of his faith, Baher (like many persecuted believers) was forced to take the most dangerous work. Within a week, his arm was severed in a horrific accident. Then his brother died in the job.

"I hated myself and I hated God."

Young believers like Baher need hope. Not just in Egypt, but across the

Middle East.

Because if this generation's faith is crushed by persecution, the church in the region faces a bleak future.

Will you rewrite the future for young Christians, to bring hope and purpose?

Every HK\$580 could train and disciple vulnerable young quarry workers in Egypt, to strengthen their faith.

Thank you

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