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# WORLD WATCH LIST 2024

## THE TOP 50 COUNTRIES

COUNTING THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS





# COUNTING THE COST



**BEHIND EVERY NUMBER IS A NAME.  
BEHIND EVERY STATISTIC IS A STORY.  
BEHIND EVERY COMMITMENT THERE  
IS A COST.**

**Every day, around the world, millions of people choose to follow Jesus.**

For some, this is a choice they have made many times, the continuation of a commitment going back many years. For others it will be something more recent, a decision which still feels new, fresh, radical. And for some it will be the first time they have done such a thing – they have had a conversation, an encounter, or even a dream, which has led them to following Jesus for the first time in their lives.

All of us pay some kind of cost for following Christ. But for the 365 million Christians around

the world who live in situations of persecution, this price is high. For some, it means always being treated unfairly and fighting for justice. For others, the price is paid in bruises and beatings; in prison sentences and pain. Some give up their home, their family, their security. Others know that they will always be the targets and scapegoats. The cost of discipleship is paid in sleepless nights and days full of fear.

**Counting the cost: it's what every persecuted Christian does.**

And what's really inspiring is that they consider it a price worth paying.

OPPOSITE Man in North Korea (illustrative image)

# THE PEARL AND THE FIELD

**In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus describes the kingdom of God as something beyond value. As a treasure in a field, an incredibly valuable pearl.**

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-46, NRSV)

When we think about the persecuted church, it's easy to focus on the price, and forget about the pearl. So what



is this pearl? What is the treasure that persecuted Christians have found?

**FREEDOM.** For those living in repressive regimes, or enmeshed in restrictive rules, discovering the freedom we find in Christ is exhilarating. As Sanaz\* from Iran says, "I was a girl with no identity. Everything was stolen from me by force." She became a Christian after encountering Jesus in a dream. "When I met Jesus, He saved me!" she says. "He gave me an identity in Him. Jesus



transformed my life; He gave me life!"

**LOVE.** So many marginalised people in the world feel unloved and unwanted. And then they discover the unconditional love of Christ. Salhea\* encountered Jesus in a training programme run by Open Doors local partners in Asia. "I could not look into anyone's eyes," she says. "I was so afraid people would see my shame. I did not think I was of any use to anyone. I could not read, write or cook; 'useless girl' my mother always said. Now I can embroider and make my own clothes and I am studying here to complete my basic certificate of education."

**"When I met Jesus,  
He saved me!"**

**FORGIVENESS.** In Christ we find forgiveness and mercy. And in being forgiven, we must learn how to forgive. Pastor Zachariah (BELOW) from Nigeria – whose photo is on the cover of this book – lost his wife, when Fulani militants attacked his village. And yet he can say, "I am asking God to forgive our attackers, and for them to enter the kingdom of God and not to die in their sins."

**TRUTH.** "Extremists make our ministry easier!" says Saleh\* (OPPOSITE), who started a house church network in Yemen. "Because of them, people reject and are horrified by what is being done in the name of 'religion'. They start searching for the truth and we are there to tell them about it! We are there to show them God's love and mercy."

Saleh has been arrested, beaten and

threatened with death for following Jesus. His name is on the 'wanted' list of extremists in Yemen. He knows the cost. "We knew this would happen to us once we chose to follow Jesus," he says. And yet he refuses to give up.

"If we sit at home and do nothing, we would be safe," he says. "But what kind of Christians would we be if weren't risking our life for others to know Life?"

That's the Word. Life. That is what lies behind the figures, hidden in the field: life in all its fullness. The people you will meet in this book need our prayers, our gifts, our voices raised in support. But we need also to receive from them. To see, as they see. To discover that the kingdom of God is real.

It's as real and alive as a field. As thrilling and exciting as hidden treasure.

As solid and beautiful and priceless as a pearl.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

Saleh (OPPOSITE) and Pastor Zachariah (BELOW) both choose to forgive their persecutors; Image of Saleh is from a re-enactment of his story



# PERSECUTION IS GROWING – BUT SO IS THE CHURCH

**One in seven Christians worldwide face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith – that's 365 million of our brothers and sisters.**

The statistic comes from the latest World Watch List, an annual ranking of the countries where it's most dangerous to be a Christian.

But it doesn't tell the whole story. Five years ago, the figure was one in nine. In the past year alone, the number of persecuted believers has risen by about five million.

Put simply, the persecution of Christians is worsening.

One of the reasons that it's getting worse is because the church is growing. In the most hostile of environments, it continues to thrive. More than anything, it's a testament to the power of the gospel and the eternal truth that 'God's word is not chained' (2 Timothy 2:9). But it's also because the global church is standing with its most vulnerable members. It's what family does.

However, as the findings of the latest report show, this help cannot waiver. Indeed, your prayers and

support are arguably more crucial than they ever have been.

## **EXTREMISTS EXPLOIT INSTABILITY IN AFRICA**

A key trend is growing violence in sub-Saharan Africa. The region accounts for some 90 per cent of the estimated 5,000 believers killed for their faith worldwide, with the highest number of Christians killed being in Nigeria (4,118).

The last year has also seen a sharp rise in attacks on churches and Christian homes and buildings in places like Ethiopia and Burkina Faso. This explains why the number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa recording extremely high

### **NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT**

**NORTH KOREA (#1) :** For 20 years, North Korea was number one on the World Watch List. That was until 2022, when it dropped to number two behind Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover. The following year, North Korea returned to the top, where it remains this year. The familiar annual pattern has been re-established.





**Last year, almost 280,000 Christians were forced from their homes because of their faith, more than double the previous year. Most are from Nigeria and Myanmar.**

ABOVE Christians flee homes in Myanmar

levels of violence has risen by two to 15.

The main driver of this is Islamic extremists capitalising on regional instability.

In places like Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Mozambique and Somalia, military coups and other fractures in governance and security have enabled militancy to flourish. Because of their faith, Christians are affected disproportionately.

Even when not specifically targeted for their faith, Christians caught up in regional conflicts – such as in Sudan and Ethiopia – are deemed soft targets who can be attacked with impunity.

## **FOREIGN INFLUENCE BOLSTERS AUTOCRATIC REGIMES**

There's another threat emerging in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Wagner Group – a private military contractor with reported connections to the Russian government – has been gaining a foothold in the region. The

group is known for its ruthless activities in countering Islamic extremism, with civilians often deemed expendable. It has been increasingly active in countries including Burkina Faso and Mali, where speaking out against their activities is near impossible and even life-threatening. Given Christianity's links to the West, believers in the region – particularly those from Protestant groups – fear the repercussions of being associated with Western opposition to Wagner's actions.

The other crucial issue here is the Wagner Group's manipulation of key economic sectors in the region, notably mining. This threatens to bring yet more instability to sub-Saharan Africa – and that's the last thing Christians need.

## **CHRISTIANS SQUEEZED OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

The story for our brothers and sisters in the Middle East and North Africa remains a sadly familiar one.

In Iraq, waning political influence and an increase in incidents of incitement of hatred against believers has

**Almost 15,000 churches or public Christian properties were attacked or closed in 2023 – that's seven times the number recorded in 2022.**

BELOW Church destroyed in Pakistan



increased pressure on the country's embattled Christian minority. Another issue is Turkey's military incursions in the north, where most Iraqi Christians live, which is preventing believers from returning to their homes.

Meanwhile, Libya has climbed to third on the World Watch List, due to an increase in violence against Christians. In Tunisia, pressure on Christians continues to grow as President Kais Saied's rule drifts into authoritarianism.

### WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

In Mali, changes to the country's constitution – which includes recognition of the country's Christian minority – were approved in a referendum. It's seen as a step towards elections in 2024 and a return to

#### NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

**INDIA (#11):** Whilst the situation for Christians in India has improved in some places, it's worsened rapidly in others. Last year, 160 believers were killed for their faith, which is almost a tenfold increase from the previous year, whilst 62,000 believers were forced to flee their homes – an alarming increase on the estimated 800 in 2022. The epicentre is Manipur, where hostilities between the majority Meitei and minority Kuki ethnic groups have devastated Christians on both sides of the conflict.



**In this year's top 50, the countries that saw the biggest rises in persecution are Laos (#21), Algeria (#15), Nicaragua (#30), Oman (#31) and Sudan (#8).**

ABOVE Children in Sudan wait in line to receive food at a church amidst conflict.

civilian rule and stronger governance.

In Karnataka State, India, the Hindu nationalist BJP were dislodged by the Congress Party, who have promised to revise or withdraw the 'anti-conversion laws' that are often used to target Christians.

Despite an increase in hostility in Sri Lanka, Open Doors partners say that church closures have been prevented because of teaching given to pastors on how to stand up for their rights.

Meanwhile, in North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, the online sphere is increasingly a place for people to encounter Jesus and access fellowship and discipleship.

And in Mexico, the translation of religious law into Tzotzil – a widely spoken indigenous language – was published, with support from Open Doors. It will enable believers to better understand



their rights amid persecution.

## DARE TO DECLARE

The statistics and stories that highlight rising persecution are sobering, but they point to a greater reality: the church is growing.

A big riser in this year's list is Laos, jumping ten places to 21, due to a spike in violence against Christians. "In all my years working as a researcher, I never saw a clearer connection of a growing church with growing opposition, resulting in higher scores," said a researcher. "I find it comforting that the biblical verses predicting this connection are still true."

It's a similar story worldwide – one that began around 2,000 years ago, when persecution scattered the early church because of the impact of the gospel. Wherever believers settled, the church continued to grow.

**Last year, the number of Christians worldwide detained without trial for their faith was 3,329 – an increase in six per cent from 2022**

BELOW A tribal pastor from Vietnam is arrested and imprisoned by local authorities on charges of 'abusing democracy and freedom' in May 2023



## NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT

**NICARAGUA (#30):** Nicaragua entered the World Watch List for the first time last year. This year, it's jumped 20 places to 30, as the government's hostility towards Christians continues at an unnerving pace. This goes back to 2018, when protests broke out against President Ortega's dictatorial regime. Christians are among those to make a stand, leading to harassment, surveillance, arrests and seizure of Christian buildings.

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel," Paul wrote in Philippians 1:12, before adding his courage has enabled others to 'dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear' (1:14).

As we remember and support our persecuted family, may Paul's words be true of us, too.



# WHAT IS THE WORLD WATCH LIST?

The Open Doors World Watch List is a unique, reliable, comprehensive ranking of the countries where the persecution of Christians is most extreme.

**UNIQUE...** Because, as far as possible, our data is gathered at grass-roots level, using in-country networks and local partners on the ground.

**RELIABLE...** Because over three decades, the list has gained a reputation for credible, dependable information. Our approach and analysis are independently audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom.

**COMPREHENSIVE...** Because it measures persecution in all its forms: not only violence, but also the level of freedom Christians have to practise their faith in their private, family, community, national and church life.

This data is converted into a 'persecution score', which is then ranked into categories:



You can find more details on our methodology and research at [opendoors.org.hk/persecution](https://opendoors.org.hk/persecution)

## WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY 'PERSECUTION'?

Persecution takes many forms, from insults and abuse, to discrimination in education and the workplace, to outright violence. We might characterise these different forms as 'smash' and 'squeeze'.

The 'smash' represents overt violence against Christians because of their faith: bombing, arson, shooting, rapes, kidnappings, forcible evictions.

The 'squeeze' represents the suffocating restrictions faced by many Christians in daily life: red tape and legal restrictions, an inability to publicly display your faith, discrimination woven into the fabric of society.

'Smash' is physical, visible, violent. 'Squeeze' is insidious, structural, suffocating.

But both have the same aim: the erasure of Christianity in their country, region, tribe or family.



# ONE FAMILY, ONE BODY



**Over 365 million Christians around the world face persecution and discrimination for their faith.**

For almost 70 years, Open Doors has stood alongside these faithful brothers and sisters, strengthening and supporting those who count the cost of following Christ. Our global underground networks work in more than 70 countries, including some of the most dangerous places on earth.

At heart, the work of Open Doors is always a partnership with the church – both in the countries where Christians are persecuted, and the countries where Christians are free.

Where Christians face persecution, we support the church by smuggling Bibles and Christian literature, offering legal advice, and training church leaders and other Christians, and providing vital practical support such as emergency aid and trauma care.

Where Christians are free, we help the church to pray, give and speak up for

their persecuted brothers and sisters.

We are one family, one body. And we all have a role to play, working together to bring the light and love of Christ into some of the darkest places on earth.

## **SUPPORT YOUR PERSECUTED BROTHERS AND SISTERS**

**GIVE.** Give an isolated Christian a precious Bible, help rebuild homes and churches, provide persecuted Christians with vital food and medicine.

**PRAY.** Sign up for weekly prayer emails full of stories of courageous faith, or see our website for more prayer resources.

**SPEAK OUT.** Tell your church about their persecuted brothers and sisters, using our resources.

**Find out more at [opendoors.org.hk](https://opendoors.org.hk)**

ABOVE Rukayyatu in Cameroon lost everything in an attack by Islamic militants Boko Haram - including her treasured Bible. Now, she's delighted to be given a Bible by Open Doors local partners

# THIS IS NOT AN IMPULSE- BUY

This is not an impulse-buy  
An item 'off the rack'  
Faith demands we count the cost  
There is no going back

This is not an impulse-buy  
The search could cost us dear  
But love, joy and peace are ours  
When we find Jesus near

This is not an impulse-buy  
Persecution comes with loss  
But believers still risk everything  
They've counted up the cost

We are not an impulse-buy  
It cost our Lord His life  
We are His pearl, His treasure  
We're precious, worth the price

This is not an impulse-buy  
Will we heed the call?  
Take up our cross and follow Him  
And gladly spend it all.




ABOVE Elmira in Central Asia reads her Bible (see p61 for her story)



# 1 NORTH KOREA



## POPULATION

26.1 million / 400,000 Christians

## LEADER

Kim Jong Un

**PERSECUTION SCORE 96 (-2)**

Being discovered to be a Christian in North Korea is effectively a death sentence.

Believers will either be deported to labour camps or killed on the spot. And it's not just them: their whole family gets the same fate. It's impossible for Christians to live freely in North Korea.

Meeting for worship is extremely dangerous and must be done in utmost secrecy. Even being found to own a Bible could mean you are killed.

Through secret networks outside the country, Open Doors workers are helping North Korean believers by providing vital food and aid, shelter and discipleship training for North Korean refugees, and training through radio broadcasting.

## PLEASE PRAY

- That believers imprisoned for their faith will know God's sustaining love
- That secret believers will be able to meet without discovery
- That Kim Jong-un's regime will become more open to the help of the international community.

# 2 SOMALIA



## POPULATION

17.3 million / A few hundred Christians

## LEADER

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

**PERSECUTION SCORE 93 (+1)**

Christians are a 'high-value target' for murder by militant group al-Shabaab. They want to wipe out all Christians from Somalia.

Leaving Islam is also seen by many as a betrayal of Somali culture and clan – so new believers face harassment, abuse and even murder from their own families and communities.

Church life in Somalia is almost non-existent, and dangers for Christians are increasing.

Open Doors supports Somali believers across the Horn of Africa through discipleship training and by equipping them to cope with severe persecution.

## PLEASE PRAY

- That believers who risk everything to follow Jesus will have strength to persevere in their faith
- For protection for Christians at risk from Islamic militants and their own families
- That isolated believers will have opportunities for fellowship.





## THE COST OF GIVING

**In North Korea, the winter can be a death sentence. Severely limited food, insufficient clothing and the savage, biting cold expose people to starvation and illness. This makes the provision of winter support through Open Doors secret networks outside the country crucial to the survival of the underground church.**

But it's not just those outside the country who make extraordinary sacrifices. A secret believer called Sa-Myung\* returned a tenth of the food she was given, as a tithe: she is effectively risking a tenth of her life. It was an extraordinarily costly thing to do, but Sa-Myung was happy to do it because of her gratitude and faith.

Other secret North Korean believers are showing the same remarkable selflessness. The country is facing a famine, but Christians are still generous. "There are inspiring stories of believers helping their neighbours — sharing food, medicine and other resources they own, even though the food is not enough for even themselves," says Brother Simon\*, Open Doors coordinator for North Korea ministry.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

### PAUSE

**Read Mark 12:41-44**

Funds from the offering were meant to go to the teachers of the law and the poor. But given Jesus' words in 12:40, this widow had good reason to doubt whether she'd benefit from the fund.

The generosity of the widow and Sa-Myung is foolish in the eyes of the world. But it shows how much they love God, because the cost — no matter how high — is worth it for knowing Him.

### PONDER

- Has someone ever given you an unexpectedly generous gift? What impact did it have on you?
- How do Sa-Myung's and the widow's generosity affect the way you see God?
- Where might the Holy Spirit be nudging you towards costly generosity?

### PRAY

***Spend a few minutes asking God to multiply the impact of believers' selfless giving in North Korea.***

**3**

## LIBYA

100



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### POPULATION

7.1 million / 35,100 Christians

### LEADER

Interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh

**PERSECUTION SCORE 91 (+3)**

A small number of Libyans follow Jesus. It could cost them everything.

Converts from Islam face the most intense violence from family and community. They risk house arrest, attack, abduction, sexual violence and murder.

It is incredibly dangerous for converts to meet together to worship. Even Christians who aren't Libyan or converts are at risk from extremist groups, particularly in areas where Islamic militants are active.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- Libya remains deeply unstable. Pray for political stability and that order will come to Libya
- For God to protect migrant Christians from militant extremists
- That God will help His people to find fellowship with one another.

**4**

## ERITREA

100



0



### POPULATION

3.7 million / 1.7 million Christians

### LEADER

President Isaias Afwerki

**PERSECUTION SCORE 89 (no change)**

Eritrea is known as the 'North Korea of Africa', due to its intense authoritarian government.

Eritrea only recognises three heavily monitored Christian denominations (Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran), so anyone who follows Jesus outside of these denominations is at constant risk. Around 1,000 Eritrean Christians are currently in prison, without being charged with any crime. Some have been held for more than ten years, enduring shocking conditions.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Eritrea to provide economic empowerment projects, discipleship and persecution survival training.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That prisoners would know God's grace, and that His Spirit will be their comfort and companion
- That the gospel will spread in Eritrea
- That God will change the hearts of President Afwerki and his government, so they allow religious freedom for all Eritreans.





**"May God  
help you, my  
daughter, and  
bring you back  
home to your  
other sisters."**

Mary's daughter Bilki was among those girls kidnapped from a school in Chibok in 2014. She has still not been released.

## 5 YEMEN



### POPULATION

31.8 million / A small number of Christians

### LEADER

President Rashad al-Alimi

**PERSECUTION SCORE 89** (no change)

Following Jesus in Yemen continues to be extremely dangerous.

Yemeni society is strongly Islamic, conservative and tribal, and the tribal punishment for denouncing Islam can be death or banishment. Most believers are Yemeni and come from Muslim backgrounds. As conversion from Islam is forbidden by law, Christians must keep their faith secret, or risk severe repercussions from their families, the authorities or radical groups. This can include divorce, loss of custody of children, arrest, interrogation and even 'honour' killings.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ in Yemen by distributing relief aid, training believers and pastors, and offering shelter and livelihood support to persecuted believers and their relatives.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For strength and protection for all Yemeni believers
- That converts would have wisdom and courage to share their faith
- That peace would replace years of brutal war and humanitarian crisis.

## 6 NIGERIA



### POPULATION

222.2 million / 103 million Christians

### LEADER

President Bola Tinubu

**PERSECUTION SCORE 88** (no change)

Christians in Nigeria, particularly in the Muslim-majority north, continue to be terrorised with devastating impunity by Islamic militants and armed 'bandits'.

More believers are killed for their faith in Nigeria each year than everywhere else in the world, combined. The attacks are often brutal and can involve destruction of property, abductions for ransom, sexual violence as well as death. Believers are stripped of their livelihoods and driven from their homes, leaving a trail of grief and trauma.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Nigeria to strengthen Christians with discipleship and persecution survival training, trauma care, relief aid and economic empowerment projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That victims of violence and their families will find healing and hope in Jesus
- For peace, stability and safety in the areas where militants attack
- For Open Doors partners helping displaced Christians with practical and spiritual care.





THE COST OF

# SURRENDER

**Yusuf from Nigeria was aged eight when Jesus first captured his heart. But attempts to pursue Christianity were hindered by his family, who went to great lengths to discourage him from leaving Islam. He was even sent to another state to live with his uncle, who took him to a mosque with the aim of cutting Christianity from his life.**

Despite his uncle's efforts, Yusuf began meeting with other believers. Aged 20, he made the brave decision to surrender his life to Jesus, even though his family were dead set against it. It came at an immediate cost: his family persecuted him relentlessly, depriving him of food and forcing him to leave home.

Today, Yusuf continues to follow Jesus, supported by Open Doors local partners who are providing him with physical, emotional and spiritual support. He's grateful for his new global family in Christ, and prays that God will use him as 'a vessel in His vineyard'.

## PAUSE

**Read Luke 14:25-27**

This is a difficult passage, but one our persecuted family can shed light on. That's because choosing Jesus over family is the costly decision so many believers make around the world today.

The word 'hate' (14:26) means to 'love less'. Choosing Jesus over his family shows that Yusuf's love for Jesus is such that it's greater than anyone or anything else he loves, including his own life.

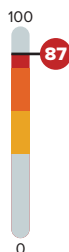
## PONDER

- How does Yusuf's story affect the way you understand the challenging words of Jesus in Luke's passage?
- What does Jesus mean when He says that those who don't 'hate' their own life and 'carry their cross' cannot be His disciple (14:26-27)?

## PRAY

***Spend time praying that persecuted believers, like Yusuf, will find contentment in Jesus as they surrender their lives to Him.***

## 7 PAKISTAN



### POPULATION

234 million / 4.2 million Christians

### LEADER

Interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

**PERSECUTION SCORE 87 (-1)**

Pakistan's blasphemy laws are often used to target minorities, but Christians are disproportionately affected. Even a baseless accusation can be extremely dangerous.

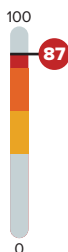
The devastating attack in Jaranwala in August 2023 is a sobering reminder of the hostile environment Pakistan's Christians live in. The number of Christian girls and women abducted, abused and forcefully converted to Islam is growing – some are even killed. All Christians face institutionalised discrimination, given only jobs that are deemed degrading. Although historical churches are relatively free to worship, they are heavily monitored and have been targeted for bomb attacks.

Open Doors is active in Pakistan through the HOPE (Helping Others Pray and Encourage) Community.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians will be protected from spurious allegations of blasphemy
- That believers will hold onto their identity as children of God, in a society that often demeans them
- For protection for women and girls.

## 8 SUDAN



### POPULATION

47.1 million / 2 million Christians

### LEADER

Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan

**PERSECUTION SCORE 87 (+4)**

Violence against Christians has spiralled since civil war broke out in April 2023.

Sudan had been making positive steps towards religious freedom – but coups and instability in the country are threatening to reverse that. At least 165 churches have been forcibly closed and others destroyed, and there has been a recent spike in Christian men being abducted and murdered by radical groups. There are fears that the conflict will give Islamic extremists a renewed foothold in the country. The Sudanese church urgently needs our prayers.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Sudan to strengthen persecuted Christians through persecution survival training, discipleship training and economic empowerment projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For an end to the violence and for lasting stability
- For provision and community for Christians displaced by the conflict
- That true religious freedom would come to Sudan.



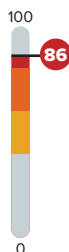
**"The Word of God does not just burn away because someone lights it and sets it on fire. The Word of God is in my heart. This is just a reminder."**

In August, mobs rampaged through the town of Jaranwala, Pakistan, in what looks like a concerted effort to rid the area of Christians. Churches were burnt and homes ransacked. This quote comes from an anonymous Pakistani believer.



9

## IRAN



### POPULATION

87 million / 1.2 million Christians

### LEADER

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 86 (no change)

Conversion from Islam to Christianity is illegal in Iran, and anyone caught as a convert can be arrested and imprisoned.

The authorities view conversion as an attempt by the West to undermine Islam and the Islamic government of Iran.

Those who are detained can face abuse and torture in jail. Some Christians are released and monitored and know a second arrest would mean a long prison sentence. Converts also face persecution from their families and communities, and loss of inheritance or forced marriage to a Muslim is common.

Open Doors raises prayer support for the believers in Iran.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For protection and fellowship for secret converts from Islam
- That the Iranian government would allow freedom for all religions
- Praise God that the church is growing! Ask God to continue to pour out His Spirit on Iranian believers.

10

## AFGHANISTAN



### POPULATION

41.7 million/ A few thousand Christians

### LEADER

Hibatullah Akhundzada

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 84 (no change)

If an Afghan Christian's faith is discovered, they may be killed – or tortured into giving information about fellow believers.

Since the Taliban takeover, many believers have fled and live as refugees in neighbouring countries. Those who chose to stay, or can't leave, must keep their faith secret or they may simply disappear.

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and often don't report sexual assault as it is seldom punished and because of the stigma it brings.

Converts from Islam also face harsh punishment from their families and tribes.

Open Doors works through partners to strengthen Christians from Afghanistan.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For secret believers to be strengthened and protected
- Ask God to touch the hearts of Taliban leaders and other extremists who oppress Christians
- For Afghan refugees to receive relief and opportunities to work, attend school and worship freely.



پدر آسمانی ما

# OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

**Christians around the world have prayed the Lord's Prayer for centuries. Throughout this booklet, we'll look at each line in turn – and how they connect with the persecuted church.**

The very first line of the Lord's Prayer is an intimate invitation to draw close. God invites us to address Him as a parent – as someone close to us, who loves us and provides what we need. It also reminds us that, as Christians, we are all one family. When we pray to 'our Father', we remember that we are beloved children in God's sight.

Sanaz\* from Iran was 13 when she was forced into marriage. By her early twenties, she was twice-divorced with two children, whom she left in the care of their fathers, and addicted to drugs. "I was a girl with no identity," Sanaz remembers. "In those days, I literally had no-one to guide me and no hope in life. I thought about suicide many

times; I lived in fear all the time."

But then Sanaz encountered Jesus in a dream – and everything changed. "When I met Jesus, He saved me! He gave me an identity in Him. I never had a good relationship with my father. I loved him but he never showed me that he loved me. When I felt God's love as a heavenly Father, it really filled my empty heart."

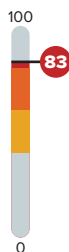
Sanaz mended her relationships with her children, and now works to help the poor and needy in her community. She's been physically attacked and faces daily threats – but she can't stop following Jesus. "I became a mother who cares for her children," Sanaz says. "Jesus has done a lot of miracles in my life and I live to witness His miracles in the lives of others, bringing glory to Him."

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

**Our Father in Heaven, thank You that You invite me to draw near to You because You love me. Be close to persecuted Christians who are feeling isolated and abandoned. Remind them that You are their Father and that You care for them. Help the church to show others that they are Your beloved children. Amen.**

پدر آسمانی ما

# 11 INDIA



## POPULATION

1.4 billion / 71 million Christians

## LEADER

Prime Minister Narendra Modi

**PERSECUTION SCORE 83 (+1)**

Christians in India are increasingly under threat from Hindu extremists who believe that Indians ought to be Hindu and any other faith is not welcome in the country.

More states are implementing anti-conversion laws that are used to target and intimidate Christians. Converts from Hinduism face extreme pressure from their families and communities. Footage of violent attacks is widely shared online. The disproportionate targeting of Christians during ethno-religious violence in Manipur in 2023 is a sobering reminder of the persecution Christians face in many parts of India.

**Open Doors partners strengthen the church in India by providing Bibles, emergency aid, persecution survival training, and livelihood projects.**

## PLEASE PRAY

- That Hindu extremists will accept Christians as fellow Indians and recognise religious freedom
- That God will bring about healing and a lasting peace in Manipur
- That God's church will flourish in every part of India.

# 12 SYRIA



## POPULATION

20.6 million / 579,000 Christians

## LEADER

President Bashar al-Assad

**PERSECUTION SCORE 81 (+1)**

Syria has a historic Christian community, which is afforded some degree of openness in their faith. But Christians from other denominations can face great danger.

The legacy of the takeover of Syria by groups with certain ideologies can still be seen. Large numbers of Christians left their place of origin to go to other majority Christian areas as IDPs or have left the country. While some believers have returned to rebuild their lives and communities, there are still far fewer than there used to be.

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for the people of Syria to heal after years of war, economic uncertainty and natural disasters.
- Pray for peace for all people in Syria.



## THE COST OF PRAYER

**“Who gave you permission to gather this way and pray?” That’s what Pastor Chandra’s\* church in India was told when Hindu extremists barged into their meeting. They even called the police, who sided with the accusers by shouting, “You shouldn’t pray! Who gave you permission?”**

Pastor Chandra and his wife were jailed. The conditions were horrendous. Despite this, they prayed for God’s will to be done – a costly prayer that was duly answered.

The pastor shared a cell with two prisoners, including a man who’d murdered two people. When they spotted him praying, they asked what he was doing. Pastor Chandra told them about Jesus. Both of them became Christians. “Not only that, I was also able to share the gospel to the police! Hallelujah!”

The couple were later released, and Open Doors local partners have since given the family practical support.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

### PAUSE

**Read Acts 16:16-40**

This passage encouraged Pastor Chandra and his wife whilst in prison – and the similarities in their stories are striking.

Like the pastor, Paul and Silas wound up in prison because of prayer. They were going to a prayer meeting and their prayer for deliverance caused uproar. Both parties also courageously prayed in prison, leading to onlookers having remarkable encounters with Jesus.

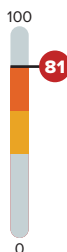
### PONDER

- In both stories, the simple act of attending a prayer meeting was costly; what does this courage say about their belief in the power of prayer?
- In what ways can you be more courageous in your prayer life?

### PRAY

***Spend a few moments praying that our persecuted family will be given continued boldness in their prayer lives.***

# 13 SAUDI ARABIA



## POPULATION

36.3 million / 2.2 million Christians

## LEADER

Crown Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud

**PERSECUTION SCORE 81 (+1)**

The small number of Saudi Christians is slowly increasing and they're becoming bolder, sharing their faith with others online – but it comes at great cost.

Conversion from Islam to Christianity is unacceptable under Islamic law. If discovered, men and boys may be forced out of home, whereas women and girls are usually isolated and abused within the home. All converts risk being killed to 'restore' the family honour. Foreign Christians who share their faith with Muslims or gather for church activities risk detention and deportation.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

## PLEASE PRAY

- That secret believers will find other Christians to meet with
- That Christians will be led to those who are searching for truth, and the church will grow
- That Saudi society would be opened to the gospel.

# 14 MALI



## POPULATION

22.1 million / 497,000 Christians

## LEADER

Transition President Assimi Goïta

**PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (+3)**

Jihadist attacks continue to have a devastating impact on the country's small number of Christians.

Violent attacks on Christians, churches and Christian properties have increased, which is why Mali has risen on the World Watch List. Those who leave Islam to follow Jesus risk violence and pressure from their relatives and communities. But there is some good news too. In June 2023, Malians approved a draft constitution that included the country remaining a secular state, leading to hope for greater freedom for religious minorities.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Mali to provide persecution survival training, discipleship programmes and economic empowerment projects.

## PLEASE PRAY

- For courage and safety for Christians living at risk of attack
- That those affected by persecution will know God's comfort
- That elections will go ahead, leading to stronger, just governance in Mali.



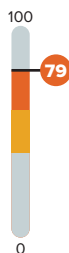


**"When I entered the prison, I said to God: 'You did not bring me here without reasons. I am seeking Your will and I am sure that Your hand is with my family. Please show me why You brought me here.'"**

Pastor Iman\* is an Iranian believer. He was imprisoned for his faith, but refused to stop sharing. During his time in prison, 23 others became Christians.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

# 15 ALGERIA



## POPULATION

46 million / 144,000 Christians

## LEADER

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune

**PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (+3)**

Violence against Algerian Christians is increasing, and putting more believers in danger.

State pressure has increased, with more Protestant churches forced to cease all activity and church leaders threatened with prosecution. Christian homes and businesses have been subject to more raids. Any Christian from a Muslim background faces intense persecution and opposition, and many feel they have to keep their faith secret.

**Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care.**

## PLEASE PRAY

- For courage and wisdom for church leaders whose churches have been forced to close
- For every Christian falsely accused of 'shaking the faith of a Muslim' to know God's protection and love
- That every Christian in Algeria would be able to worship freely with other Christians.

# 16 IRAQ



## POPULATION

43.2 million / 154,000 Christians

## LEADER

President Abdul Rashid

**PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (+3)**

Iraq's Christian community continues to rebuild and restore as it heals from the horrors inflicted by so-called Islamic State. Many still suffer from trauma, though the church is determined to remain and grow.

Traditional Christian communities continue to face persecution from militant groups, as well as discrimination in employment and education. Christians who have converted from Islam often face intense pressure from their families and communities. They can be threatened, abused, lose family members, face forced marriage or even be killed.

**Open Doors local partners strengthen the church in Iraq by providing Bibles, training, trauma care, livelihood projects and microloans, help to rebuild homes and churches, and crisis relief.**

## PLEASE PRAY

- For Christians and churches who are victims of discrimination
- Praise God that rebuilding continues in northern Iraq. Ask Him to bless this work
- That Open Doors local partners will be Christ's hands and feet in Iraq.

ત્રીશ નામ પવિત્ર માના જામ

## HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

**So, we've drawn near to God.  
Now that we're in that intimate,  
safe space, '...hallowed be Your  
name' teaches us to give God  
praise before anything else.  
Before we ask for forgiveness,  
or our daily bread, we remember  
that God is holy and good.**

But what about when we feel far from God, or we find ourselves in a frightening or dangerous situation? How easy is it to praise God when we're not sure if He is safe, or even good?

Vaani\* is a Christian from India. When she refused to deny her faith in Jesus, her husband tortured her. Their two teenage daughters lived in fear of their father and what he might do to them.

Eventually, Vaani separated from her husband and took her daughters to live with her parents. But she still had no money, and no means of earning for her family. But Vaani took comfort in Psalm 27:6, "Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord."

Open Doors partners helped her to start a cloth business, and now she earns enough to take care of her whole family. "Your visit has helped me to praise His name and testify how your help encouraged and opened doors to many more blessings in my life," Vaani says.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

**Our Father, hallowed be Your name. Thank You that You are holy and good. Help me lift my eyes to You in every situation in praise and prayer. Strengthen persecuted believers around the world to 'sing and make music' to You in the midst of their trials. Amen.**

ત્રીશ નામ પવિત્ર માના જામ

## 17 MYANMAR



### POPULATION

55.7 million / 4.5 million Christians

### LEADER

General Min Aung Hlaing

**PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (-1)**

Myanmar remains mired in a violent conflict that is having a devastating impact on the country's Christian minority.

Since the military coup in February 2021, Christians have encountered greater violence and tighter restrictions. Believers have been killed or driven from their homes, and churches have been indiscriminately attacked. Beyond the conflict, converts to Christianity find themselves persecuted by their Buddhist, Muslim or tribal families and communities. Communities who aim to stay 'Buddhist only' make life for Christian families impossible.

**Open Doors partners strengthen persecuted believers in Myanmar through Bible distribution, discipleship and leadership programmes, livelihood support, and youth, children and families ministries.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- That the Holy Spirit will comfort, sustain and empower believers
- For the protection of churches
- For an end to the civil war, and for justice and freedom for all.

## 18 MALDIVES



### POPULATION

535,000 / A small number of Christians

### LEADER

President Mohamed Muizzu

**PERSECUTION SCORE 78 (-1)**

This popular tourist destination declares itself to be 100% Muslim, so being a citizen of the Maldives means being a Muslim.

Those who leave Islam must keep their faith secret. It's so dangerous that husbands, wives and children may not even know of each other's faith. If discovered, believers may be stripped of their citizenship, isolated from society and lose their state benefits for violating Sharia (Islamic law).

Foreign Christians are forbidden from sharing their faith with Maldivians, and their gatherings are strictly monitored.

**Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers in the Maldives.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- That secret believers will be able to access the Bible in their own language this year
- That Christians in the Maldives will be encouraged by knowing they're part of a global, praying family
- That the new president will embrace freedom of religious minorities, including Christians.





# THE COST OF IDENTITY

**“On our identity card, it is written that our tribe name is Chin and our religion is Christian,” says Cho\*. “When people in Myanmar see it, we are discriminated against. This is the first thing we experience in Myanmar. They don’t care about us.”**

Cho is an Open Doors partner who often travels 10-12 hours on his motorbike in extreme weathers and on treacherous roads to serve believers in remote areas of Buddhist-majority Myanmar.

Following the military coup in February 2021 – which has deepened Myanmar’s civil war and exacerbated Christian persecution – checkpoints managed by the military or rebel groups are every kilometre. For Cho with his Christian ID, each stop carries risk.

“Your prayers are our protection and we feel your presence,” says Cho. “Prayers back us up, push us during the journey, and encourage us to go on.”

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

## PAUSE

**Read Galatians 3:23-29**

Paul’s words celebrate how, as Christians, we are ‘children of God’ (3:26) – a truth that enables believers, like Cho, to treasure their identity as a Christian. Even when people target them for it.

The passage goes on to highlight how this identity unites Christians ‘as one in Christ Jesus’ (3:28). We’re one big, global family – and what this means to our persecuted family is incalculable.

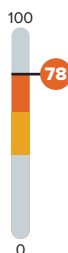
## PONDER

- In many places, ‘Christian’ is a dirty word, whether on an ID card or in the mouths of families and communities. Why is it treated with such disdain?
- How might the way the world views us as Christians hinder or help the way God sees us as His precious child?

## PRAY

***Take a few moments to pray that our persecuted family will be strengthened and galvanised by their identity as daughters and sons of the living God.***

## 19 CHINA



### POPULATION

1.5 billion / 96.7 million Christians

### LEADER

President Xi Jinping

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 78 (+1)

The situation in China has slowly and steadily deteriorated.

Official churches are compelled to toe the party line in allegiance and ideology, whilst unregistered churches are highly vulnerable to monitoring and closure. Christians who pursue or express their faith online do so at huge risk, and children under 18 are forbidden from attending church. Converts from Buddhist and Muslim backgrounds face enormous pressures to renounce their faith.

Through local partners and churches, Open Doors supports believers in China with initiatives including persecution survival training and provision of contextualised Christian literature.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians will be given wisdom, boldness and ingenuity as they navigate challenges
- For the protection and flourishing of house churches
- That church leaders facing pressure will be strengthened and encouraged.

## 20 BURKINA FASO



### POPULATION

22.7 million / 5.3 million Christians

### LEADER

President Ibrahim Traore

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 75 (+4)

Once the epitome of religious harmony, Burkina Faso is now plagued by Islamic extremism that's having a devastating impact on Christians.

Political instability in the country has strengthened the influence of militant groups, who are known to target Christians. The country has one of the world's severest displacement crises, with believers among those driven from their homes.

Additionally, converts from Islam can face pressure and threats from their families and communities.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen Christians in Burkina Faso by providing persecution survival training, relief aid, and spiritual and trauma care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For God to heal and comfort those affected by persecution
- That displaced Christians will know God as Jehovah, their Provider
- That programmes run by local partners will bring hope and joy to persecuted believers.



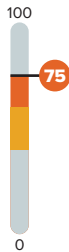


**“When I think God has forsaken us, I remember His words in the Bible. He tells us that He will be with us no matter what. We know that God will change our pain into joy again.”**

Fati\* and her family are some of those being helped by Open Doors partners after having to flee their home because of extremist attacks.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

## 21 LAOS



©Alamy | Representative image

### POPULATION

7.6 million / 212,000 Christians

### LEADER

President Thongloun Sisoulith

**PERSECUTION SCORE 75 (+7)**

Laos has jumped ten places in the latest ranking because of an alarming rise in violence against Christians.

It comes against a backdrop of long-term hostility towards Christians. Surveillance of church activities by the Communist authorities is common, forcing many house churches to operate under the radar. Meanwhile, converts are seen as traitors of their community who've 'angered spirits', with many receiving persecution from their own families.

Open Doors local partners strengthen persecuted believers in Laos by providing Christian materials, leadership and discipleship training, socio-economic development programmes, advocacy support and emergency relief.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians facing surveillance will be given wisdom and courage
- That God will comfort and provide for believers who've been expelled from their communities
- For the protection and flourishing of churches.

## 22 CUBA



©Alamy | Representative image

### POPULATION

11.3 million / 7 million

### LEADER

President Miguel Diaz-Canel

**PERSECUTION SCORE 73 (+3)**

In Cuba, anything deemed to be in competition with the Communist Party is quashed – and that includes Christianity.

Church leaders and believers who speak out against human injustice or political corruption – or who dare to criticise the regime – risk harassment, smear campaigns and even imprisonment.

Churches must be registered, but the process is fraught with difficulty. Those that are registered do so under extreme scrutiny, including infiltration by security agents.

Open Doors local partners strengthen the persecuted church in Cuba through Bible distribution, livelihood projects, and support for children and pastors' families.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For strength and protection for church leaders
- That Cuba's leaders would give churches greater freedom
- That believers will have the courage to stand strong in their faith.



*tl yamb soolma uua, tl yamb daab maan  
teng zug wa a sen maand arzana.*

## YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

What would it look like to see God's good kingdom established on earth? When we pray 'Your kingdom come', God invites us to be part of establishing it here: in our homes, our communities, our world. We do that by praying for our wills to be aligned with His. That's not easy when it's costly, or painful. But we will see a day when 'there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain' (Revelation 21:4).

Traore\* and his father were on their way to church in Burkina Faso when they were ambushed by Islamic extremists. Traore managed to run away, but he heard the gunshots that killed his father.

Now in his late teens, he's had to wrestle with his faith. "It breaks my heart sometimes to think about my father. But even in those moments,

I know God has not forgotten us. He does everything according to His will.

"I do feel sometimes that God has forsaken me. But when I read the Bible, I realise God has been with me since the beginning. I thought that God didn't care for me anymore... but I realised God was supporting me in my pain."

Despite knowing what it may cost him, Traore wants to obey God's will and follow in his father's footsteps as an evangelist. "Studying is good, it can provide a job and money, but my vision does not go in that direction. No, what I'm interested in is to become a missionary.

"We trust God. He said we should not worry. When we face difficulties, we should only look to Jesus."

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

**Our Father, thank You for the promise of Your beautiful kingdom – and that You give us the strength to do what You ask of us. May our persecuted brothers and sisters see Your kingdom come in their lives and nations, and help Your church to do Your will, even when it costs us. Amen.**

*tl yamb soolma uua, tl yamb daab maan  
teng zug wa a sen maand arzana.*

## 23 MAURITANIA



### POPULATION

5 million / 11,100 Christians

### LEADER

President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani

**PERSECUTION SCORE 72** (no change)

Mauritania is staunchly Islamic, making it very difficult for Christians to express their faith. For converts from Islam, it's almost impossible.

Apostasy is legally punishable by death, although there are no known examples of this in recent years, but the threat remains. Converts risk expulsion from families and loss of livelihood; they may even be forced to leave the country.

While foreign Christians are largely left alone, evangelism is forbidden and can lead to prosecution.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That converts will be encouraged to pursue their faith
- For fresh opportunities for believers to gather and share their faith
- For greater religious freedom in Mauritania.

## 24 MOROCCO



### POPULATION

38.2 million / 31,200 Christians

### LEADER

King Mohammed VI

**PERSECUTION SCORE 71** (+2)

This Muslim-majority country remains socially conservative and this can make life challenging for Christians.

Converts are particularly prone to hostility from their family, community and the authorities. It's illegal to 'shake the faith of a Muslim', making it dangerous for Christians to evangelise.

Government hostility largely stems from the 'threat' Christianity poses to the king's authority, deriving from the claim that he's a descendant of the Islamic prophet.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For opportunities for Christians to share their faith
- That converts will be empowered to stand strong
- That people will encounter Jesus through dreams and visions.



**"May the Lord cause  
you to flourish,  
both you and your  
children."**

**PSALM 115:14**

Open Doors partners run literacy programmes across several far-flung villages in Laos. Literacy training not only helps Christians to find jobs and to reach their potential, it also allows them to read Scripture for themselves.

## 25 UZBEKISTAN



### POPULATION

34.8 million / 352,000 Christians

### LEADER

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev

**PERSECUTION SCORE 71** (no change)

Uzbekistan's authoritarian regime continues to stifle Christian freedom, with some believers viewed as 'extremists' and spies trying to destroy the government.

Whilst officially registered churches (e.g. Russian Orthodox Church) experience less scrutiny, non-traditional churches are particularly prone to police raids, threats, arrests and fines – particularly unregistered Baptist, Evangelical and Pentecostal groups. Converts from Islam, meanwhile, can encounter severe pressure for their faith from their families and communities.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles, biblical and vocational training, medical and social care, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Christians who've faced police raids will have courage to keep meeting
- That the Uzbek authorities will recognise the valuable role of Christians in society
- That God will provide for families whose faith comes at a cost.

## 26 BANGLADESH



### POPULATION

169.4 million / 950,000 Christians

### LEADER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed

**PERSECUTION SCORE 71** (+2)

In Bangladesh, converts to Christianity face the most severe restrictions, discrimination and attacks.

These believers are often accused of betraying their community. Bangladeshi converts often gather in small house churches due to the risk of attack. Any churches that evangelise among the Muslim majority face persecution – but even historical denominations like the Roman Catholic Church are increasingly targeted by death threats and attacks.

Open Doors works through local church partners to strengthen persecuted believers in Bangladesh through biblical training, Bible distribution, literacy programmes and socio-economic development projects, as well as emergency relief aid.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For healing for Bangladeshi Christians who have been attacked for their faith
- That God will give perseverance to Christian converts
- That people who persecute believers will come to realise the truth of Jesus' love.



nenpe leo chakula sheen cha bika niku

# GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY BREAD

The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for every day. We're not meant to pray just once, for everlasting bread – we're meant to pray for it daily. God means for us to come to Him every day because He has designed us for intimacy with Him. Our 'daily bread' doesn't always refer to physical needs either. We can ask God to give us all we need. And He promises to provide.

Gertrude\* from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has seen God's provision for her and her family first-hand. When her sister and her husband were killed in separate attacks by Islamic militants, Gertrude became the sole provider for her sister's five children, alongside her own six.

Gertrude was injured in the attack that killed her husband, Jonas\*, so she can no longer farm to

work. But despite her struggles, she holds fast to God. "If I went far away from God, I would already be dead. I have hope that God is present. I had many questions, but as He is good, I just consoled myself. It is God alone who gives me the strength to be able to bear this pain."

Open Doors partners provided Gertrude with financial support to start a small business. With the money, she has started a shop where villagers can buy everyday necessities. She acknowledges that the prayers of her community sustain her. "When I feel bad, I call them for this or that, they help me in prayer, and they also encourage me to pray, and it helps me to not grow tired."

*\*Names changed for security reasons*

**Our Father, thank You for Your daily provision in my life. Help me to come to You first with all my needs, and trust that You will sustain me. Strengthen and provide for persecuted Christians around the world, especially those who have very little. Help them to stand strong in their faith as they see You at work.**

**Amen.**

nenpe leo chakula

sheen cha bika niku

## 27 NIGER



### POPULATION

27.1 million / 66,600 Christians

### LEADER

Interim leader Abdourahmane Tchiani

**PERSECUTION SCORE 70** (no change)

Last year's military coup has added to the growing hostility felt by many Christians across Niger.

Islamic militants have already been growing in influence in Niger, leading to a rise in attacks on Christian churches and schools. In areas under militant control, church services are carried out under the shadow of potential violence or physical attack. Those who leave Islam to follow Jesus face pressure from their own families to renounce their new faith.

Open Doors works through partners in Niger to strengthen persecuted Christians through economic empowerment programmes, leadership and discipleship training, persecution survival training and pastoral care for new believers.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For stability following the military coup, and the influence of extremist groups to halt
- For the protection of Christians living under the threat of violence
- That believers from Muslim backgrounds will know that they are not alone.

## 28 CAR (Central African Republic)



### POPULATION

5.1 million / 3.8 million Christians

### LEADER

President Faustin-Archange Touadéra

**PERSECUTION SCORE 70** (no change)

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been in constant conflict since 2013 – and the persecution situation has changed very little in that period.

Christian leaders who dare to denounce the violence have been threatened, and their church buildings have been attacked. The conflict has also resulted in the displacement of thousands of Christians who have lost their homes and livelihoods and now live in camps. Converts from Islam also face persecution from their family and local community.

Open Doors partners support believers in the Central African Republic with persecution survival training, economic empowerment projects and trauma care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God would miraculously bring about a peaceful resolution to conflict
- For believers to be protected, particularly in areas where they are targets of extremists
- That God would provide – physically, spiritually and emotionally – for His people.



**"Thanks to your help, we have bought chickens, goats and cows. We use these animals even to help other people to start their own businesses. If you had not helped us, we would have lost our faith, because of our difficult situation."**


Christians in Niger can find themselves economically sidelined. Training programmes run by Open Doors partners help women like Mariama to be financially independent.

敞開的門

**WORLD  
WATCH  
LIST 2024**

**PERSECUTION LEVELS:**

 Extreme

 Very high

**1 NORTH KOREA**

**2 SOMALIA**

**3 LIBYA**

**4 ERITREA**

**5 YEMEN**

**6 NIGERIA**

**7 PAKISTAN**

**8 SUDAN**

**9 IRAN**

**10 AFGHANISTAN**

**11 INDIA**

**12 SYRIA**

**13 SAUDI ARABIA**

**14 MALI**

**15 ALGERIA**

**16 IRAQ**

**17 MYANMAR**

**18 MALDIVES**

**19 CHINA**

**20 BURKINA FASO**

**21 LAOS**

**22 CUBA**

**23 MAURITANIA**

**24 MOROCCO**

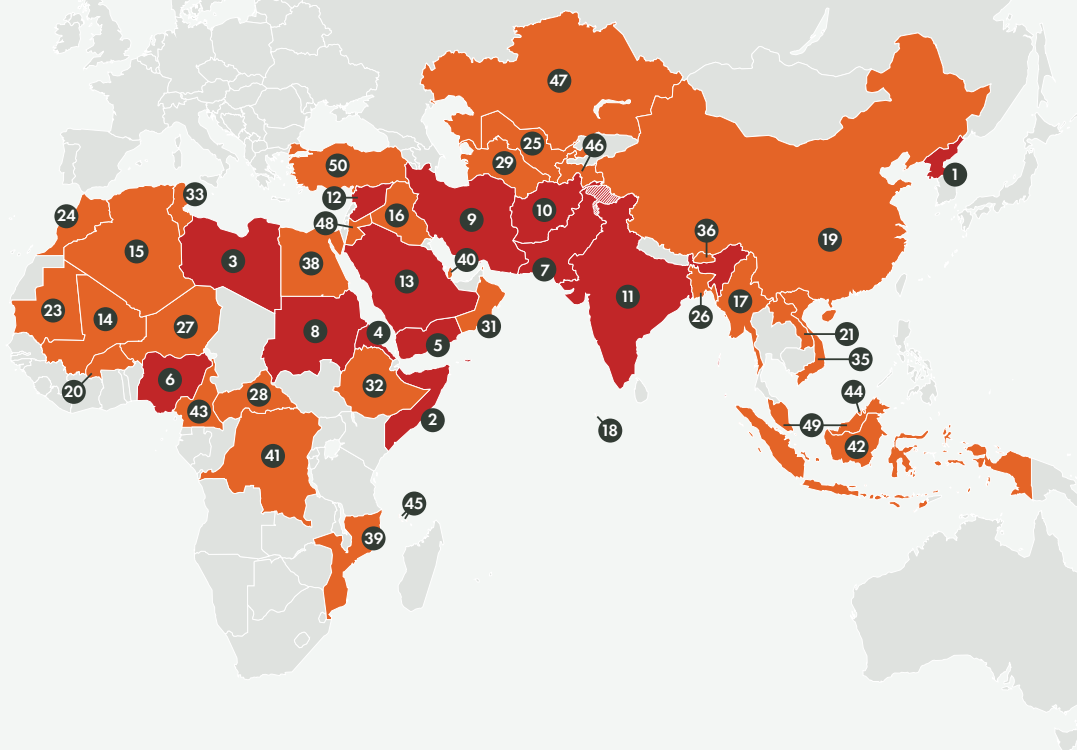
**25 UZBEKISTAN**

**26 BANGLADESH**

**27 NIGER**







**28 CAR**

(Central African Republic)

**29 TURKMENISTAN**

**30 NICARAGUA**

**31 OMAN**

**32 ETHIOPIA**

**33 TUNISIA**

**34 COLOMBIA**

**35 VIETNAM**

**36 BHUTAN**

**37 MEXICO**

**38 EGYPT**

**39 MOZAMBIQUE**

**40 QATAR**

**41 DRC (Democratic  
Republic of Congo)**

**42 INDONESIA**

**43 CAMEROON**

**44 BRUNEI**

**45 COMOROS**

**46 TAJIKISTAN**

**47 KAZAKHSTAN**

**48 JORDAN**

**49 MALAYSIA**

**50 TURKEY**

## 29

### TURKMENISTAN



#### POPULATION

6.3 million / 66,000 Christians

#### LEADER

President Serdar Berdimukhamedov

**PERSECUTION SCORE 70** (no change)

Tight restrictions and close surveillance make it very hard for Christians to live out their faith.

The totalitarian government of Turkmenistan uses a huge body of state agents for this monitoring, such as police, secret services and local Muslim leaders. Christians from Muslim backgrounds bear the brunt of persecution – not just from authorities, but from their family, friends and the local community.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles and Christian literature, biblical and vocational training, medical and social care, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

#### PLEASE PRAY

- That God would protect and sustain Christian converts from Islam
- That leaders living under surveillance will be able to lead God's people despite the dangers
- That the authorities will see that Christians are an asset to society rather than a threat.

## 30

### NICARAGUA



#### POPULATION

6.9 million / 6.5 million Christians

#### LEADER

President Daniel Ortega

**PERSECUTION SCORE 70** (+5)

Last year, Nicaragua entered the World Watch List top 50 for the first time. Now it has risen 20 places.

President Ortega continues to see Christians as enemies of the government, and recent changes to the law have been used to label church leaders as terrorists. They have been harassed and arrested, and churches are fiercely monitored. The authorities want to silence and discredit the church.

Open Doors strengthens the persecuted church in Nicaragua by providing Christian literature, discipleship training, emergency relief aid, legal advice and education for pastors.

#### PLEASE PRAY

- Ask God to soften the hearts of President Ortega and his government
- That church leaders under surveillance will be given wisdom and courage
- That God would work through Open Doors partners to strengthen the local church.



## THE COST OF

# OWNING A BIBLE

**“They saw a Bible in my hands,” says Bedru\* from Ethiopia. “As soon as they saw that Bible, harsh persecution started.” Harsh indeed, including the destruction of his family’s home and their coffee plantation.**

Despite this, the family’s faith is resolute. “There is nothing that can take me back from continuing this journey with Jesus,” says Bedru. Tibi\* and Rosa\* – his wife and 15-year-old daughter – are equally determined. When Tibi faces pressure from her family, she tells them, “What God gives me is much better than what you promise me.” And in response to intimidation from friends, Rosa responds, “I have the Lord to take care of me.”

The family have returned to their farm to rebuild their lives, helped by Open Doors partners. Opposition remains, but their example is softening attitudes. Bedru visits the sick and bereaved, and even resolves local disputes. “They have come to respect me,” he says.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

## PAUSE

### Read John 6:60-71

The conversation highlights the power and offence of Jesus’ words. They are life-giving but challenging, confronting our beliefs and behaviours. No wonder the Bible often leads to persecution!

The confidence that Bedru maintains in God’s Word, and how it shapes his response to opposition, are testaments to Jesus having the ‘words of eternal life’ (6:68).

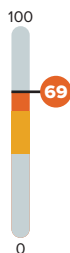
## PONDER

- If owning a Bible brought risk of persecution, how would it affect the way you used it?
- How can Bedru’s story help you when the words of Scripture are hard to follow or grasp?

## PRAY

***Take a few moments praying that discoveries of Bibles will lead not to hostility but people recognising that its words are ‘full of the Spirit and life’ (John 6:63).***

## 31 OMAN



### POPULATION

5.4 million / 196,000 Christians

### LEADER

Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 69 (+4)

Increasing violence against Christians has led to Oman rising 16 places on the World Watch List this year.

Converts from Islam to Christianity face pressure from family to recant their new faith.

This can include physical, mental and emotional abuse, job loss, family expulsion, disinheritance and losing custody of their children. Converts are likely to be socially ostracised, and lose the necessary connections to find work.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organising prayer, distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That converts will be strengthened to withstand pressure from their families
- Praise God for the relative freedom foreign Christians experience, and pray it extends to native Omanis
- For Christian leaders to have wisdom under intense surveillance.

## 32 ETHIOPIA



### POPULATION

123.8 million / 74.7 million Christians

### LEADER

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 69 (+3)

An increase in violent incidents is the main reason Ethiopia has risen several places on the World Watch List.

Converts from Islam face social ostracism and other pressures, as well as attacks on churches, homes and schools. Some persecution in the country sadly also comes from members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, who target those who leave to join evangelicalism or other Protestant denominations.

Open Doors works through the local church to strengthen Christians in Ethiopia with leadership, persecution survival training and economic empowerment projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For converts from Islam to remain strong in their faith as they face threats
- That the church throughout Ethiopia will be united in Christ
- That God would protect Open Doors' work with local churches.



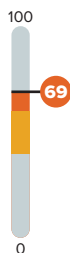


**"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."**

**GALATIANS 3:26-27**

Somewhere in the Arabian Peninsula, a believer from a Muslim background is secretly baptised. Despite the danger, this is a joyous moment of new life.

## 33 TUNISIA



### POPULATION

12.2 million / 22,200 Christians

### LEADER

President Kais Saied

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 69 (+2)

Tunisian Christians are not officially recognised, and face a level of hostility that forces many to keep their faith secret.

Persecution is particularly prevalent in the south of the country, where the Muslim population is more conservative and violent Islamic militants are more active.

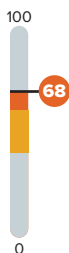
The past year has seen a small increase in the number of church attacks. There are fears that persecution will worsen if President Saied remains in power.

Open Doors works with local partners and churches in North Africa to provide leadership and discipleship training, livelihood support, legal aid, trauma counselling, Bibles and pastoral care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That isolated converts will be connected to other believers
- For women and girls who've converted from Islam to know God's fatherly care
- That Christians will one day be able to worship and share the gospel freely.

## 34 COLOMBIA



### POPULATION

51.7 million / 49.1 million Christians

### LEADER

President Gustavo Petro

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 68 (-3)

Church leaders and other Christians continue to be harassed, extorted and murdered due to the violence around control of territories between armed guerillas, drug gangs and other armed groups.

In some indigenous communities, there can be significant opposition toward anyone who has converted from traditional practices to follow Jesus.

The Open Doors Children's Centre provides a safe, Christian education to the next generation of the church.

Open Doors strengthens the Colombian church through Bible distribution, training, trauma care, community development projects, emergency aid, and education and safe houses for children.

### PLEASE PRAY

- Ask God to protect church leaders and help them to serve Him, despite the danger
- For indigenous Christians to find community and hope in the Lord
- For God to protect and preserve the Open Doors Children's Centre.

Perdónanos nuestras ofensas,  
como también nosotros hemos perdonado a nuestros ofensores.

## **FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST US**

Forgiveness is counter cultural, revolutionary – wonderful! Being forgiven by God means that I become more and more of who He calls me to be. But what about when it comes to forgiving others? As God forgives me, so I must forgive. Forgiveness is not a feeling that we muster up within us, a begrudging ‘bless you’ to those who’ve hurt us. It’s an act of obedience that we do over and over again – until it utterly transforms us.

Reina\* from Colombia was a child when she joined a guerrilla group. Lack of opportunities, and seeing innocent people caught up in conflicts, are what led her to join: “My soul was wounded... I had no peace, but pure thirst for revenge seeing so much injustice. I was filled with so much anger, so much hatred.”

She encountered God in a vision, and shortly afterwards gave her life to Him. “If I served the devil with so much love, with how much more love will I serve the One who gave me life?” she says. “Looking at all this, I have begun to feel love for souls – by looking at the work of Christ, and to value that price that God paid for me at the cross.”

Reina’s experience of God’s forgiveness led her to set up a house church, but it’s very dangerous: their meetings are watched, and others have threatened her to stop sharing the gospel. But she won’t. “I believe that, because of what Christ has done for us, God is worth serving. No matter the situation, no matter where.”

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

**Our Father, thank You that You forgive me when I ask. Please give me the strength to forgive others out of love for You. Help persecuted Christians to forgive their persecutors – and may those who persecute Your people discover Your forgiveness for themselves. May the global church be known for our willingness to forgive. Amen.**

Perdónanos nuestras ofensas,  
como también nosotros hemos perdonado a nuestros ofensores.

## 35 VIETNAM

100



### POPULATION

99.7 million / 9.6 million Christians

### LEADER

President Vo Van Thuong

**PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (-2)**

For many Christians in Vietnam, following Jesus can bring intense hostility and even violence.

Believers who convert from Buddhist or indigenous religions face intense pressure and violence for their faith. Most believers belong to ethnic minority groups, like the Hmong, and face social exclusion, discrimination and attacks. Their homes are sometimes destroyed and they are forced to leave their villages. Church meetings face constant surveillance and frequent raids.

Open Doors local partners strengthen persecuted believers in Vietnam with relief and practical aid, advocacy support, Christian resources, leadership and discipleship training and socio-economic development projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For Christians from ethnic minorities to be strengthened to stand firm in their faith
- That the country's leaders would open their hearts to the Christian community and allow them to worship freely
- That Open Doors local partners will be encouraged as they serve our family.

## 36 BHUTAN

100



### POPULATION

796,000 / 19,500 Christians

### LEADER

King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

**PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (+2)**

No churches are officially recognised by the government, which means that all Christian gatherings are illegal.

All citizens of Bhutan are expected to follow Buddhism. Anyone who converts to Christianity will be watched with suspicion – local Buddhist leaders and their family will likely try to 'reconvert' them.

Evangelical and Pentecostal communities are at risk of surveillance and raids by authorities. Christians are also forced to follow Buddhist rituals as part of paramilitary training.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen persecuted Christians in Bhutan through prayer support and other practical aid.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection for Christians who convert from Buddhism
- That Christian communities would be able to meet without interference
- For Christians who have lost family, property or belongings because they follow Jesus.





# THE COST OF EVANGELISM

**When Xuan\* from Vietnam refused to renounce her faith and refrain from telling others about Jesus, she was heavily persecuted by the local authorities. This included livestock being taken away, putting her family's livelihood at risk.**

"They warned me to stop evangelising, but they cannot stop me," she says.

"They cannot stop the gospel from being shared! Many of the Christians in my village became believers because I was stubborn."

She continues: "Sometimes, I visit people in their houses at night. In other cases, I set up the time to meet with those who live farther. I drive my motorbike to meet them. I do this because I love them. I will not forsake my mission, my calling. Even if the authorities catch me, I will let them do everything they can to stop me. Even if they kill me, I know I am going to die for the Lord."

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

## PAUSE

**Read Acts 4:1-22**

Peter and John were told to stop evangelising because 5,000 became believers and a man was healed. Similarly, Xuan was targeted because 'every day, more and more people came to know Jesus'.

Church growth is a threat to power structures, making evangelism dangerous in many places. But still, believers like Xuan 'cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard' (4:20).

## PONDER

- What does the courage of Xuan, and Peter and John before her, say about their confidence in what they have 'seen and heard'?
- In our own society, why does evangelism often make us nervous, and how can we overcome this?

## PRAY

***Give some time to asking the Holy Spirit to provide our persecuted family with opportunities and courage to share their faith with others.***

## 37 MEXICO



### POPULATION

132.8 million / 126.9 million Christians

### LEADER

President Andres Manuel López Obrador

**PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (+1)**

Although the majority of Mexico's population is Christian, many believers live in danger of persecution, particularly from criminal gangs and drug cartels.

Christians who speak out against their activities, or who are involved in community work or evangelism, are deemed a threat – which makes them a target.

In some indigenous communities, those who decide to abandon ancestral and traditional beliefs to follow Jesus face fines, incarceration and forced displacement.

**Open Doors strengthens persecuted believers in Mexico with biblical training, legal support, trauma care and socio-economic aid.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- For the protection of Christians vulnerable to hostility from criminal gangs
- That leaders of indigenous groups will see the value of Christians in their communities
- That God will continue to strengthen the faith of our persecuted family in Mexico.

## 38 EGYPT



### POPULATION

108 million / 9.8 million Christians

### LEADER

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

**PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (no change)**

Christians who have converted from Islam experience the most severe persecution in Egypt.


Levels of persecution are higher in the Upper Egypt region, where Islamic hardliners are active, especially in rural communities; several attacks on believers have been recorded in 2023. Christian men can experience lack of employment opportunities, women can be harassed in the street, and children can be bullied at school. The state also makes it impossible for converts to officially be recognised as Christians, denying them their rights.

**Open Doors works through local partners in Egypt to support the church throughout the country with literacy training, education, advocacy, medical outreach, and youth, family and women's ministries.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God will protect Christians from Muslim backgrounds
- That Christians who have converted from Islam will find fellowship
- For Christians to have legal rights and not be discriminated against.



A man with a mustache and short grey hair is smiling warmly at the camera. He is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and dark trousers with a brown belt. He holds a small, light-colored book or pamphlet in his right hand. The background is a rustic, dimly lit interior with wooden beams and hanging wires, suggesting a church or a workshop in a rural setting.

**"Remember your  
leaders, who spoke  
the word of God to  
you. Consider the  
outcome of their  
way of life and  
imitate their faith."**

**HEBREWS 13:7**

In a church in the mountains  
of Mexico, a pastor prepares  
to lead his flock.

# 39

## MOZAMBIQUE



### POPULATION

34 million / 19.2 million Christians

### LEADER

President Filipe Nyusi

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 68 (no change)

The rise of Islamic extremism in the north of the country is having a devastating impact on the lives of believers.

Churches have been burnt down, pastors abducted, and many killed. Christians are also often caught in the crossfire of the ongoing conflict between government forces and jihadist groups, making them even more vulnerable to violence and displacement. The government also restricts religious freedom and converts from Islam can face hostility from their families and society.

Open Doors supports persecuted Christians in northern Mozambique by providing emergency aid, persecution survival training, and economic empowerment projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For courage and protection for Christians living under the threat of attacks
- That Christians facing pressure for their faith will hold onto Jesus
- For wisdom for Open Doors partners as they encourage the church to be salt and light.

# 40

## QATAR



### POPULATION

3 million / 414,000 Christians

### LEADER

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 67 (-1)

For Qataris, conversion from Islam to another religion is forbidden, and those known to be Muslims aren't even allowed to enter a church.

Most Christians are migrant workers and enjoy a degree of religious freedom. However, evangelising to Muslims is strictly forbidden and can lead to prosecution and deportation.

Many migrant workers live and work in poor conditions, while their Christian faith can add to their vulnerability.

Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organising prayer, distributing Scripture resources, and training believers and pastors.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That migrant Christians in Qatar will be able to continue to worship relatively freely
- For strength for secret believers under pressure from their families and communities
- That God will soften the hearts of the authorities so Qataris can follow Jesus openly.



ຢ່າໃຫ້ພວກເຮົາໂຕ້ກັບເຂົ້າໄປໃນການທົດລອງ

# LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

This part of the prayer might raise questions. Surely we don't need to ask God not to lead us into temptation? But the Greek word translated as 'temptation' can also mean a test, or as some Bible translations have it, 'the time of trial'. While God is our refuge, and does protect us, how do we reconcile this with going through times of trial?

Maixay\* from Laos had been serving in church ministry for 20 years when his second child – just four years old – passed away from an illness.

"I questioned God; I was angry at Him," Maixay remembers. "I served Him for many years, yet He took my child away. I pleaded with Him to heal my son, but He didn't listen to my prayer."

Maixay stopped going to church –

but his church never stopped praying for him. "It took me two years to get over my anger with the Lord," says Maixay. "The faithful prayers and presence of my leaders worked their way to my heart. They never stopped caring for me and encouraging me. I repented and decided to recommit my life to the Lord."

Maixay decided to pursue a new vision: to encourage persecuted believers in their times of trial. Supported by Open Doors partners, Maixay now delivers persecution survival training to Christians across Laos. "If we don't visit and give them encouragement, how will they stand strong in their faith?" he says. "I know how it feels to be in pain and to long for people to encourage me. I want to be there for these believers."

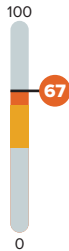
*\*Name changed for security reasons*

**Our Father, thank You that You never leave me when I face challenges and difficulties, even when it feels like my prayers fall on deaf ears. Send me encouragement in my times of trial, and help me to be an encourager of others. Draw near to persecuted Christians in distress and provide them with communities who will sit with them and pray for them. Amen.**

ຢ່າໃຫ້ພວກເຮົາໂຕ້ກັບເຂົ້າໄປໃນການທົດລອງ

# 41

## DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo)



### POPULATION

98.2 million / 93.4 million Christians

### LEADER

President Félix Tshisekedi

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 67 (no change)

Christians who live in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), home to more than 100 armed groups, are at incredible risk for following Jesus.

Christians in this part of the country are vulnerable to attacks, including murder, abduction and sexual violence.

Church leaders who speak out put a target on their backs.

More than five million have been displaced by the violence, with many Christians among that number.

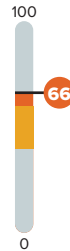
Open Doors works through local partners to support Christians in the DRC through persecution survival training, economic empowerment projects and trauma care.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God would protect His people in DRC from violent attack
- That God will provide for His people who have lost everything
- For the hearts of the extremists to turn to the hope and truth of Jesus.

# 42

## INDONESIA



### POPULATION

281.8 million / 34.6 million Christians

### LEADER

President Joko Widodo

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 66 (-2)

The situation for Christians has been deteriorating in recent years, with Indonesian society increasingly influenced by conservative interpretations of Islam.

Many converts from Islam experience pressure from their families, such as isolation and verbal abuse. The pressure is also higher in places like West Java or Aceh, where radical Islamic groups exert a heavy influence on society and politics. In some regions, church groups also face difficulties getting permission for building churches.

Open Doors local partners strengthen persecuted Christians in Indonesia by providing Bibles and Christian books, socio-economic empowerment projects, discipleship and persecution survival training and relief aid.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God will protect secret communities of Christians
- For Christians rejected by families and communities because they left Islam to follow Jesus
- That God will bring Indonesian society to a broader tolerance of Christian worship.



**"I can't leave my God.  
God sees everything we  
are carrying. He sees it  
in front of His cross."**

Neema\* and her family were attending church when extremists detonated a bomb. One of her sons, four-year-old David\*, was killed, while his brother Danny\* (aged eight) lost an eye.

*\*Names changed for security reasons*

## 43 CAMEROON



### POPULATION

28.6 million / 17.6 million Christians

### LEADER

President Paul Biya

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 66 (+1)

The spread of Islamic extremist ideology continues to accelerate in north Cameroon, which means conversion from Islam to Christianity is more dangerous than ever.

New converts are often forced to practise their faith in secrecy, and owning Bibles or any Christian literature can lead to threats and aggression. Ongoing fighting between the government and rebel groups has affected the church, with some rebel groups targeting Christians. Many churches are unable to function due to attacks and displacement.

**Open Doors partners strengthen persecuted Christians in Cameroon by providing emergency relief aid, trauma care, economic empowerment projects and spiritual care for new believers.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- For the violence, especially in the north of the country, to end
- That the victims of violence will find God's comfort and restoration
- That God would make the church in Cameroon a place of peace, hope and stability.

## 44 BRUNEI



### POPULATION

449,000 / 54,200 Christians

### LEADER

Sultan Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 66 (+1)

As Sharia (Islamic law) continues to be implemented in Brunei, Christians face ongoing restrictions on living out their faith.

Conversion from Islam is illegal, and pressure is intense for anyone who follows Jesus. Many Protestant churches are forced to register as businesses or secular organisations that must submit reports to the government each year.

Bringing Bibles into the country is heavily controlled, and rarely allowed outside of personal use. Any sharing of faith with Muslims is illegal.

**Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers in Brunei.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- For Christians who struggle with laws that are biased against anything outside of Islam
- That younger Christians in Brunei will continue to follow Jesus despite peer pressure and criticism
- That there would be more freedom to worship openly in Brunei.





## THE COST OF GATHERING

**“Who is the person in charge?” asked one of the local officials who stormed Anna’s\* house. She and 20 other church members had gathered for prayer and worship.**

“Me,” said Anna, without hesitation. The church had put measures in place to avoid detection. Every time they met, it was at a different venue. Each member agreed that, if a gathering was discovered, the host would claim full responsibility and spare the others. “This is for God,” they said.

During her two-week detention, she was ordered to watch other prisoners at night, which she worked for a greater purpose.

“I was extremely exhausted and my eyelids got so heavy,” she recalls. “But this was an excellent opportunity to practise praying. When everyone else was sleeping, I prayed hard! Then I started getting my energy back.”

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

### PAUSE

**Read John 20:19-23**

The setting of this passage will resonate with many of our persecuted family. They gather together, with the doors locked and fear permeating the air.

But the disciples’ troubled hearts are relieved when Jesus appears unexpectedly, saying, “Peace be with you.” (20:19). It’s a beautiful reminder of the Lord’s presence with those who gather secretly.

### PONDER

- Anna knew her church would one day be detected. Spend time reflecting on what your church would be like, if faced with a similar threat.
- What especially resonates with you from Anna’s story?

### PRAY

***Bring before God our sisters and brothers who gather secretly, despite the dangers this brings.***

## 45 COMOROS



### POPULATION

926,000 / 4,700 Christians

### LEADER

President Azali Assoumani

**PERSECUTION SCORE 66** (no change)

Christians are forbidden from sharing the gospel, and any distribution of Bibles or religious materials to a Muslim is illegal.

Christians who convert from Islam are the most likely to face severe persecution. Any Christian caught evangelising can face a fine and up to a year in prison.

Christian women are vulnerable to trafficking, and men can find themselves without work as employers favour Muslims. In some parts of the country, extremist groups are active and threaten believers.

Open Doors works through local partners to strengthen the persecuted church in the East African islands through discipleship and economic empowerment projects.

### PLEASE PRAY

- For protection for Christians who have chosen to convert from Islam
- That secret Christians would know that they belong to a global family and find fellowship with other believers
- That the government of Comoros will ease their restrictions on practising the Christian faith.

## 46 TAJIKISTAN



### POPULATION

10.2 million / 63,100 Christians

### LEADER

President Emomali Rahmon

**PERSECUTION SCORE 66** (no change)

No religious activities beyond state-run institutions are allowed in Tajikistan.

The majority of Christians belong to the Russian Orthodox Church, which is largely tolerated by the regime. However, registering Christian churches outside historical denominations is effectively impossible, and it's illegal for children under the age of 18 to take part in public religious activities. Christians from a Muslim background face additional pressure from their family and local community to renounce their faith.

Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles, biblical and vocational training, medical and social care, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That the government would ease their tight grip on religious freedom
- That believers from Muslim backgrounds will not lose hope or faith in Jesus
- That church leaders and local partners will have time to rest to avoid burn out from their ministry.



**“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?”**

**ROMANS 8:35**

Elmira\* is the youngest in her family, and the first to become a Christian. Her family want her to give up the faith. She has even suffered violence. But she is standing strong.

*\*Name changed for security reasons*



# 47

## KAZAKHSTAN



### POPULATION

19.4 million / 4.9 million Christians

### LEADER

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 65 (no change)

Religious freedom in the country has been under constant threat since legislation was introduced in 2011.

For Christians, this means increased surveillance, raids on meetings, arrests and imprisonment. Any church outside of the Russian Orthodox Church is in constant danger of intense monitoring and crackdowns from the state authorities. Converts from Islam suffer the harshest persecution. They can be locked up by their families, beaten and eventually kicked out of their communities.

**Open Doors strengthens persecuted Christians in Central Asia by providing Bibles, discipleship, vocational training, medical and social care, socio-economic development projects, and children's, youth and women's ministries.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God would protect Christians who convert from Islam
- For safety for church leaders who are monitored by the government
- That more believers in Kazakhstan would gain access to Bibles.

# 48

## JORDAN



### POPULATION

10.3 million / 170,000 Christians

### LEADER

King Abdullah II

**PERSECUTION SCORE** 65 (no change)

Many church communities may worship freely, as long as they don't reach out to Muslims.

Even so, the Jordanian state actively monitors all approved churches. Any Christian who is active in evangelism, is known to support converts from Islam or belongs to an unrecognised church can experience pressure.

Christians who convert from Islam can face threats of beating and killings, especially from their families and communities. Churches that evangelise can face harassment from Jordanian authorities.

**Open Doors works with local partners in Jordan to raise prayer and support for Christians through training, relief aid and rehabilitation projects.**

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Jordanian believers from Muslim backgrounds will know they aren't alone
- That believers will continue to be able to worship freely
- For God to open doors so that Christians can share their faith safely and wisely.



نَجِّنَا مِنَ الشَّرِّ

## DELIVER US FROM EVIL

Sometimes rendered as ‘Deliver us from the evil one’, this last line of the prayer as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel reminds us that we cannot resist the devil – or evil – alone. It’s also a prayer to keep us from the evil plans of others. For those who have suffered, there is God’s hope and healing.

Jubran was one of 120,000 Christians who fled his home in the Nineveh Plain, Iraq, when so-called Islamic State invaded in 2014. As a young man who’s lived through war, persecution and displacement, he knows just how much Iraqi Christians have been traumatised by the events of the last decade.

“We hear many stories: children that lost both parents, parents who lost sons or daughters because of bombing,” Jubran says. “Some struggled with questions like ‘Where is God?’ and ‘If He exists,

why doesn’t He intervene?’ Some even stopped believing.”

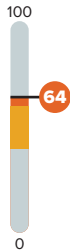
With your prayers and support, Jubran manages the Pool of Siloam Ecumenical Centre, which helps people connect with their community and heal from their trauma. “Our main goal is to bring the healing message from the Bible,” Jubran says. “It says so much about trauma and how to help people with it. From the Bible we can learn how to deal with our pain, how to live in peace.”

The centre currently runs activities three to five days a week, and Jubran hopes that the work will expand. “That is why Jesus called us. He believed that we would be able to give hope; He gave us a message to the people. There are millions who need hope and healing.”

**Our Father, thank You that You are my shield and refuge, and that You do not leave me to battle the forces of evil alone. Help me to resist all that is not of You, and shine as a light in the darkness. Give hope, healing and courage to persecuted Christians – deliver them from the evil one. Amen.**

نَجِّنَا مِنَ الشَّرِّ

## 49 MALAYSIA



### POPULATION

33.6 million / 3.1 million Christians

### LEADER

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim

**PERSECUTION SCORE 64 (-2)**

Every ethnic Malay is assumed to be Muslim, as defined by the Malaysian constitution.

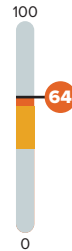
This means that any ethnic Malay who converts from Christianity is at risk of being punished under Sharia (Islamic law). These converts can also face incredible pressure from their families and the broader community. Although they have more freedom to worship, historic Christian denominations or non-profits are watched by authorities, and any group thought to be evangelising is at risk of official interference.

Open Doors works through local church partners in Malaysia to support persecuted believers with discipleship training, Bibles and Christian books, and socio-economic assistance.

### PLEASE PRAY

- That God's Spirit reveals Jesus to ethnic Malays through His Word, visions and the witness of Christians
- That Christians who can worship freely will find ways to encourage those who follow Jesus in secret
- For an end to the unjust treatment of Christians under the law.

## 50 TURKEY



### POPULATION

86 million / 169,000 Christians

### LEADER

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

**PERSECUTION SCORE 64 (-2)**

The combination of rising religious nationalism and a growing emphasis on Islamic values by the government is intensifying pressure in Turkey.

Foreign Christians continue to be forced to leave the country or banned from returning, and historical Christian communities are monitored regularly by the government. Although conversion from Islam to Christianity is not legally forbidden, anyone who does convert is seen as a disloyal Turk and can face pressure from their families and communities.

Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers in Turkey. Through local partners, Open Doors supports Persian-speaking refugee believers with training, resources and practical support.

### PLEASE PRAY

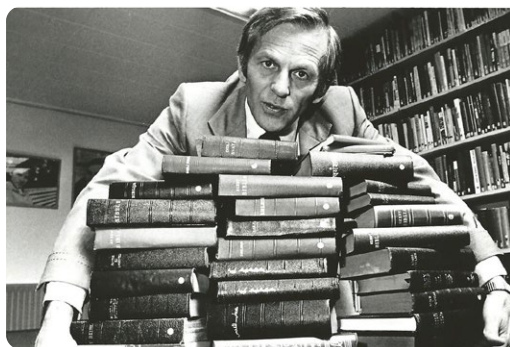
- That Christians will be seen as valued members of society, rather than a threat
- That believers will be given boldness, wisdom and protection as they follow Jesus in an increasingly hostile society
- That believers will not grow disheartened by the rising challenges facing them.

# COUNTING THE COST: BROTHER ANDREW

**“When we identify with persecuted Christians, don’t expect the world to applaud. They probably won’t. In fact, this choice may cost you. The price will certainly include prayer. There will likely be a financial cost as well: to provide help to the body of Christ in need.” - Brother Andrew**

In 1955, Andrew Van der Bijl, a young Dutchman at a theological college in Glasgow, discovered that there was a huge Socialist congress taking place in Poland. So armed only with courage, faith and a suitcase full of gospel tracts, he boarded a train for Warsaw – and stepped into a whole new life.

Behind the Iron Curtain, Andrew discovered a persecuted, oppressed church struggling to survive. But more than that, he discovered his life-long calling to ‘strengthen what remains and is about to die’ (Revelation 3:2). He began smuggling Bibles into all the countries of Communist Europe. And then, joined by others, he started seeking out and supporting persecuted Christians in the rest of the world. He became known as Brother Andrew, while his Bible-smuggling exploits gave



him the nickname, ‘God’s smuggler’.

Today, nearly 70 years after that first journey, Open Doors – the organisation which grew out of those travels – is active in more than 70 countries around the world, serving and supporting millions of Christians who face persecution and oppression.

Brother Andrew died, aged 94, in September 2022. Over the years he, and those who worked alongside him in Open Doors, paid a high price for their commitment. But they knew that the cost they were paying was nothing compared to that paid by the people they were serving: the persecuted church family around the world.

It’s easy to view Brother Andrew and his colleagues as superheroes. But their superpower, if they had any at all, was obedience. And that is an option open to all of us.

As Brother Andrew himself said, “The real calling is not to a certain place or a career, but to everyday obedience. And that call is extended to every Christian, not to a select few.”



# TAKING IT FURTHER

The World Watch List is more than a collection of data. It's an invitation to stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters through our gifts, through raising our voices on their behalf and, of course, through our prayers. And there are many other ways in which you can do that.

## GIVE

Give an isolated Christian a precious Bible, help rebuild shattered homes and churches, provide persecuted Christians with vital food and medicine. Whatever you give will make a difference.

## PRAY

Sign up for weekly emails that will give you the very latest news

and full of stories of courageous faith to inspire your prayers.

[www.opendoors.org.hk/resources/pray/subscribe](http://www.opendoors.org.hk/resources/pray/subscribe)

Or download resources to help you get deeper involved with the work of Open Doors' ministry to persecuted Christians.

[www.opendoors.org.hk/resources](http://www.opendoors.org.hk/resources)

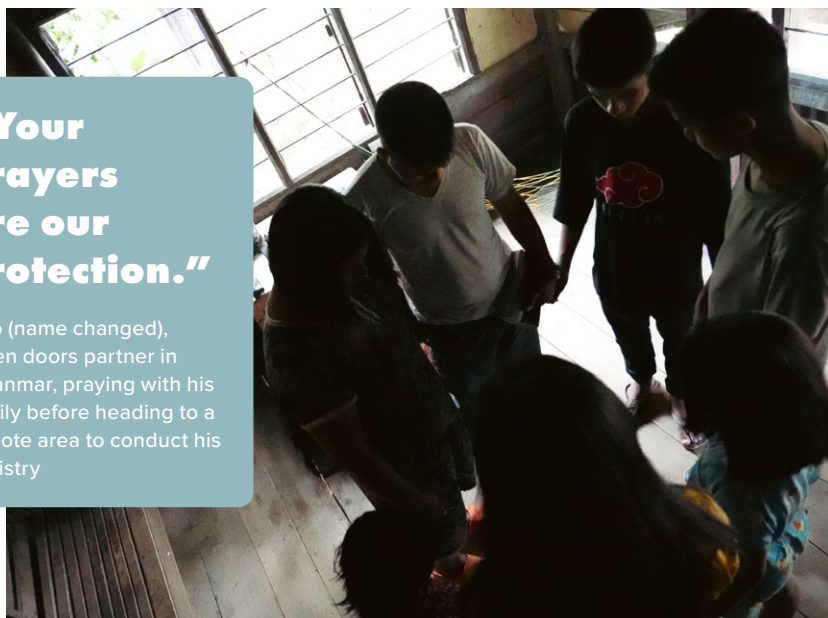
## INVITE AN OPEN DOORS SPEAKER

Why not invite an Open Doors speaker to come and help your church connect with the persecuted church?

[www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/invitespeaker](http://www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/invitespeaker)

**"Your prayers are our protection."**

Cho (name changed), Open doors partner in Myanmar, praying with his family before heading to a remote area to conduct his ministry





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# COUNTING THE COST



## EVERY DAY, JI HO IN NORTH KOREA COUNTS THE COST OF HER DECISION

After her father was taken by North Korea's state police, Ji Ho\* found herself alone and struggling for food. But she's chosen to continue following Jesus, despite the risks.

The church is growing in North Korea, despite imprisonment or death for anybody found to follow Jesus. Christians like Ji Ho face enormous danger – and starvation too. Today, will you help North Korean Christians to keep going?

**Every HK\$440 provides a food package to a North Korean believer to keep them alive.**

Visit [opendoors.org.hk](http://opendoors.org.hk) to make a gift today.  
Thank you.

\*Ji Ho's story is based on several true accounts, to protect any one person from being identified.



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