

WHAT IS FAITH
REALLY WORTH?

The Cost

THE YOUTH MAG FROM
OPEN DOORS SOUTHERN AFRICA

Open **Doors**
YOUTH

Winter edition 2019
CENTRAL ASIA



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OPEN DOORS SOUTH AFRICA



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CENTRAL ASIA

**"...because
of your
prayers..."**

**Russia. Azerbaijan. Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan.
Kazakhstan. Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan.**

You may never have heard of some of these countries but they're countries well known to Open Doors, as Christians in these Central Asian countries are persecuted for their faith. In this region, religious education to children under 18 is forbidden by law and their religious education is often neglected by their parents and the Church.

Currently the region has the first young local Christian generation that faces daily pressure for following Jesus. The Central Asian Church has no experience in how to deal with the challenges facing this group of young believers and often don't take the responsibility to help them and rather hope that families can solve this by themselves. That is why it's important that we, as the Body of Christ, come alongside them to strengthen this young generation to stand strong in facing their challenges and grow spiritually in knowing God personally.

Sadly, the situation for Christians in Central Asia will likely get worse and they may even face a

form of double persecution – from the state, because they're outside government control and from Muslim leaders, because they've left Islam. This can result in many problems for them.

We need to stand with them in prayer and support. So today, I invite you to join us in learning more about the Church in this precious part of the world!

Know that your prayers for the Central Asian Church are appreciated...

"Thank you for your faithful prayer support. Christians in Central Asia are experiencing the impact and connection, because of your prayers..." – an Open Doors colleague who shared his love for Central Asia with me!

I hope that this edition of **The Cost** will inspire you to learn more and pray for the countries in Central Asia!

Until next time,

Natasja B
Open Doors Youth Coordinator



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The Youth of Central Asia

In recent years, Central Asia has seen a remarkable and rather wonderful revival among Muslims. It's estimated that the number of Believers from a Muslim Background is around 70 000.

Unfortunately, this doesn't come without problems. Many times, Christians are accused of being part of a sect, not being a Muslim, not being a certain nationality or being traitors to their country. All because they follow Jesus. And the situation for them is likely to get worse as these governments look for a new rule of law, and can't stop themselves from attempting to use Islam to strengthen their rule.

In some Central Asian countries, one of the ways the authorities do this is by putting laws into place that stop, for example, children under 18 being taught about Christianity. This leaves children from a Christian background with no proper foundation on which to build their faith as their parents and the Church neglect their spiritual education.

That is why Open Doors has invested in these young people through children and youth activities. *"We came to the conclusion that we don't want to 'lose' this new generation. A generation which will grow up without having basic important principles in life which their parents can't give them because they don't know themselves,"* said our Open Doors colleague.

Open Doors, through these activities, wants to:

- Strengthen the young generation to stand strong in facing their challenges and grow spiritually in knowing God personally.
- Help the young generation to plan and to build a good foundation for an effective and fruitful life with God.

"It's a very strategic time to start right now; children and youth are very open for any activities you organise for them, and even non-believers are more open to send their children to Christian activities because the government doesn't do anything for children. We hope to reach about 30 000 young people in Central Asia."

Please join us in praying for the youth of Central Asia – that many lives will be changed through these activities. Pray that many will come to know Christ.



CENTRAL ASIA

1 Russian Federation

2 Uzbekistan

3 Azerbaijan

4 Turkmenistan

5 Kazakhstan

6 Tajikistan

7 Kyrgyzstan

Main religion: Islam (Russian Federation is Christianity)

Who persecutes them? Government, Islamic extremist groups, family and community.



In the **Russian Federation**, in the region of Dagestan and Chechnya, Muslim extremists have increased their violent activity, having killed at least six Christians in attacks on churches in 2018. While in **Uzbekistan** the Church faces pressure from a paranoid government with a believer getting fined for just having a Christian song on their phone.

Although **Azerbaijan** is supposed to be a secular country with religious freedom, Christians are often under surveillance and don't know who to trust. In **Turkmenistan**, religion is viewed with suspicion and distrust, and the Church is heavily regulated. Converting from Islam to Christianity can lead to violent persecution. While in **Kazakhstan**, it's believed that "to be Kazakh is to be Muslim". Here, no religious activities outside of state-run institutions are allowed. Some converts are locked up by their families, beaten and expelled from their communities.



In **Tajikistan**, government officials raid church meetings, detain Christians and confiscate religious materials such as books.

Christians in **Kyrgyzstan** experience more freedom than those in other Central Asian countries. But one of the major problems for Christians in Kyrgyzstan and the other Central Asian countries is the fact that there is little cooperation between the various denominations. This plays into the hands of the government because a divided Church will always be weak.

Please pray:

- For unity in the Body of Christ in the various Central Asian countries and for strength and continued growth.
- For Christians in the workplace who are disadvantaged and often overlooked because of their faith.
- For strength for Christians who risk everything to secretly meet together.
- For more religious freedom and for Christians to continue to be bold in sharing the Gospel.

The story of Eldos from Kyrgyzstan

Eldos Satar Uluu from Kyrgyzstan is a young Believer from a Muslim Background. He was terribly beaten up by three radical Muslim men, last year, in an attempt to force him to return to Islam. He suffered multiple injuries including a brain concussion and had to undergo several surgeries.

Thankfully, he is doing better. But he is emotionally broken and frustrated. His family was being threatened by the relatives of Eldos' attackers to stop them from going to the police to lay charges. Unfortunately, the police also tried to ignore the situation.

To add to the stress of the situation, Eldos' oldest sister, Nurzhan, witnessed her brother being
(continued on page 5)



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attacked. She was six months pregnant but sadly lost the baby due to the shock of what happened to Eldos.

Sadly, when such incidents occur Christians can't even rely on the police as they tend to side with the attackers as in Eldos' case where his attackers weren't even arrested as the police said they were busy investigating the incident. Even when the judge ordered that his attackers be put under house arrest, local police didn't appear to enforce it with his attackers being allowed to walk around freely.

Thankfully as things didn't get easier for Eldos, he was able to relocate to another country where he is now safe. But Eldos and his family still need much prayer as he has a long way to recovery both physically and mentally from the ordeal. And his family including his sister have a long way to go from overcoming the trauma from Eldos' beating and his sister losing her baby.

Pray:

- For the continued protection of Eldos and his family in the new country and that they'll be able to settle in well.
- That God will heal the broken hearts of Eldos and his family from the loss of his sister's baby.

Help Central Asian believers to remain in their country

Your prayers and support help Open Doors give urgent aid to Central Asian believers when they are imprisoned, excluded from families and communities and deprived of income and employment because of their faith in Christ.





Some of these Christians face danger when their faith is discovered or when as Muslims they become Christians. And they have every reason to flee. They're threatened by relatives, evicted from their home, fired from their job, rejected by their community or worse. But if they leave their country because of persecution, one of the few lights for Jesus in their country will go out.

One such believer is Batima who was beaten unconscious by her siblings after she gave her life to Christ. Her father said, *"You deserved it. Forget your Christian religion or you will no longer be my daughter."* She took refuge at an Open Doors safe house for two months to recover and pray about her future.

Batima decided to stay in her Central Asian country as a witness for Jesus... even though she has been disowned by her entire family.

Today, your gift can provide emergency housing, so believers can remain in their homeland. You can deposit your donation into one of our bank accounts (details below).

Please use as your reference: UG1906. Please email proof of payment to youthsa@od.org.

Bank Accounts:

Open Doors, ABSA, Northcliff (632005),
Account number: 160340568
or

Open Doors, Nedbank Business Account
(198765), Account number: 113 750 4552

Please continue to pray for Christians in Central Asia – that God will equip them and use them mightily to be a shining light for Him in the region.

*Should this project become fully funded, we will apply your gift where the need is greatest.



Representative image used.

Encourage the next generation of Christians



**Drawing campaign
ends 31 December
2019**

Christian children can face unique challenges because of their faith.

Just imagine...

- You're not free to attend a church or youth meeting either by law or because your parents won't allow it.
- That you're not allowed to have a Christian children's book or Bible.
- Police raiding your parents' secret house church meeting and arresting them, leaving you alone.
- That you're the only Christian in your school. During break time the other children don't play with you and sometimes you come home with your clothes torn because of them bullying you.

Now imagine what could happen if you could encourage such children to stand strong in the faith.

Send your encouragement to them in the form of a drawing to remind them that they're not alone and that other Christian families are praying for them. Please pray that God would help these children to grow in their faith despite all they face.

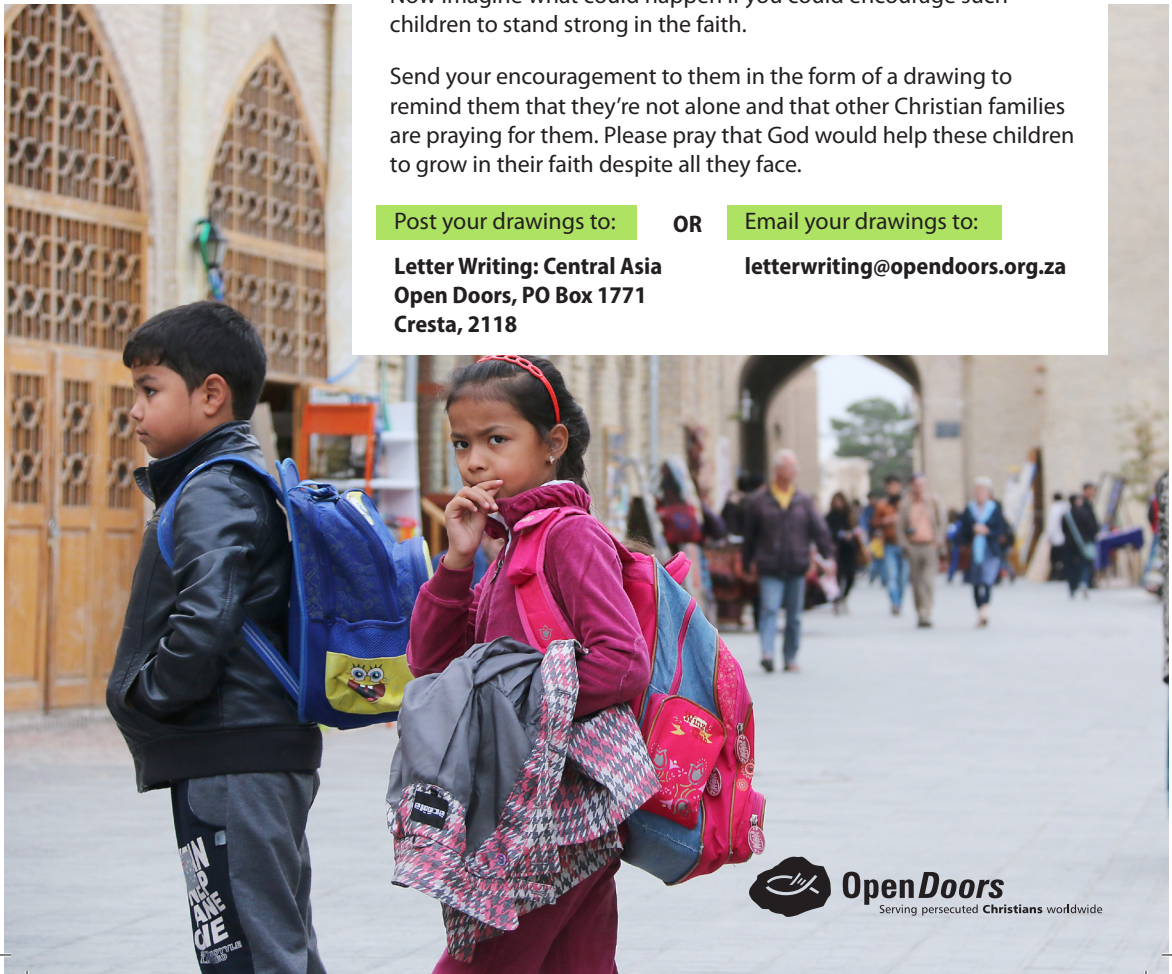
Post your drawings to:

OR

Email your drawings to:

**Letter Writing: Central Asia
Open Doors, PO Box 1771
Cresta, 2118**

letterwriting@opendoors.org.za



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Serving persecuted Christians worldwide