

LETTER WRITING GUIDE

July to December 2019

Dear Friend,

We all face struggles, discouragement, loss and many other trials that Satan may use to try and break us. In those moments, we may feel that we're alone, that we have no one to console us or understand us.

But the truth is, we're never alone! Not only do we have Christ, but we have each other. We, as the Body of Christ, share a special bond and that is our love for God. So, when we face trials, we can be comforted by the truth that we're not the only ones struggling with some kind of trial. Though distance may at times separate us, we're joined by our love for our Saviour and our endurance in "fighting the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12) amidst all our sufferings.

So today, let's take heart that we belong to a world-wide Body of Christ, who loves us and is praying for us

just as we're praying for them.

With this in mind, I want to encourage you to remind those in the Body of Christ who are facing extreme persecution for their faith, from the young to the old, that they're never alone. We may not be able to relate to imprisonment for our faith or the lack of freedom to carry out our faith. But we can relate to faith-testing suffering in one form or the other.

So let's encourage and build up our persecuted brothers and sisters living in some of the darkest places on earth by writing them a letter today.

Together in His service,



Jan Gouws, Executive Director
Open Doors Southern Africa

Your beautiful encouragement is strengthening Esther*

We first met Esther (20) in a settlement for internally displaced people in Maiduguri in 2017 where her story gradually unfolded. She told of her terrifying capture by Boko Haram in Gwoza, her three-year horror-filled captivity, her daring escape and the harsh judgment she and daughter Rebecca faced from the community and her family after their return.

It's been a difficult road for Esther and her daughter. She has faced rejection, mockery and had to endure people calling her daughter, "Boko". People's animosity towards her pained her but that has all changed. Apart from being able to provide Esther with practical support and trauma care, we were also able to start a writing campaign for her. All of which has greatly encouraged her.

When we delivered some of the letters to her, she was positively overwhelmed by the realisation of the huge amount of care and love believers around the world have towards her. "Thank you for these words of encouragement! God bless you," were the only words she could find.

Thank you for taking the time to write to Esther. Your beautiful encouragement is strengthening her and is reviving her hope. It's helping her realise that she is indeed, not alone!

*Name changed and image blurred for security reasons.





Imagine being brutally beaten by 10 Hindu extremists and in that moment realising that they're the same people that killed your fellow pastor. Or imagine watching your husband die from cancer as you can't afford the treatment and your Hindu family refuses to help you pay for it because you're a Christian. Or as a child, lying to your Hindu parents about your whereabouts to avoid getting beaten for attending a Christian children's seminar. Sadly, Christians in India don't have to imagine this because these are the kinds of situations they face frequently, all because they follow Christ.

Earlier this year, we launched an online encouragement campaign so believers around the world can encourage and pray for Christians in India as they face increasing hostility from Hindu nationalists who want to turn India into a Hindu nation, leaving no room for Christians.

They truly need our encouragement.



You can send:

- Pictures alongside Bible verses, personal encouragements, written prayers.
- Videos of personal encouragement messages, prayer meetings, Biblical content, etc.
- Audio recording of personal encouragement, Christian song (with permission), etc.

to letterwriting@opendoors.org.za and we will make sure that your message is sent to them.

Some guidelines:

- Focus on uplifting and empowering messages about God's love and salvation, as well as those that focus on blessings through persecution.
- Send personal messages, not just general Bible verses as these are more effective. Talk about your personal (spiritual) struggles and how you dealt with them.

If you have any questions, please email letterwriting@opendoors.org.za for more information.

Encourage imprisoned Iranian believers



IRAN

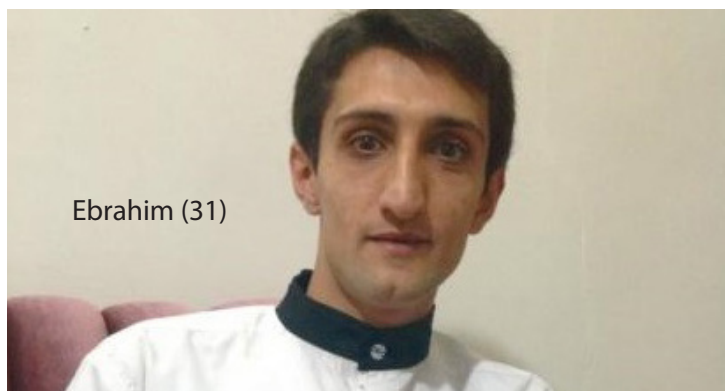
Writing campaign ends 18 November 2019

Iran is a dangerous place to follow Jesus. Christians who evangelise to Muslims can be thrown in prison and converts from Islam can be sentenced to death. Arrests continue to rise as authorities try to stamp out Christianity.

In 2013, Ebrahim Firouzi (31) was charged for "promoting Christian Zionism". He was due for release in 2015 but was sentenced to a further five years in prison under a new charge of "acting against national security, gathering and collusion". Another brother, Nasser-Navard Gol-Tapeh (57), was arrested in 2016 for "missionary activities" and is serving 10 years in prison.

Nasser wrote from prison, *"I thank God in perfect joy and peace for considering me worthy to be here because of my faith and witness to Jesus Christ."*

Please write to encourage Ebrahim and Nasser as they sit in prison for their faith. Pray that all those imprisoned will hold fast to Christ as imprisonment may result in significant trauma and isolation for believers.



Ebrahim (31)



Nasser (57)

Speak words of courage into young Florence's life



NIGERIA

Writing campaign ends 31 December 2019

Florence (13) was just 10-years-old when she was raped by a Muslim Fulani Herdsman.

"I was sleeping in the room with my grandmother when he came and raped me. Honestly speaking, from that time, I have cried a lot and I couldn't find anything that made me happy. I refused to eat, and I lost weight. People asked, 'What is wrong with you?' and I just told them, 'Nothing.'"

But then I came for the [trauma] programme. After the first two days I started feeling happy and I felt as if everything was going away gradually. And when I went back home, a lot of people started asking, 'Florence is gaining weight, what is happening?' I would say, 'Nothing is happening, it's just that I have peace of mind.'"

"I painted tears in my self-portrait because while I was drawing, I thought about everything that happened to me. But after I finished drawing I totally forgot about the whole thing (for a while)."

Write words of strength and courage to Florence. Pray that God will give her peace as she is still filled with fear when she hears the 'mooing' of the cows of the Fulani herdsman.



Remind the Chibok parents that they're not alone



NIGERIA Writing campaign ends 31 October 2019

It's been five years since that fateful night on 14 April 2014 when 230 girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram from Chibok Secondary Girls School.

Sadly, for many parents the nightmare continues as an estimated 112 girls are still missing. They wait expectantly for the day when they will be reunited with their daughters.

Yana Gana is still waiting for Rifkatu's return. *"It's been a rough journey for me,"* she said. *"There is a Hausa proverb that says, 'fresh wounds are always very painful.'"* For her, losing her daughter still feels like a fresh wound. She explains, *"Any time I speak about Rifkatu, I feel so much pain in my heart."*

We want to remind Yanu and the other Chibok parents that they've not been forgotten – that we still care for them and are praying with them for the return of their daughters.

Send a prayer or word of encouragement to the parents to help them as they continue to wait in hope of their daughters' return. Pray that God will give them strength, especially during those days when the grief is at its worst.

Christian children in Colombia need encouragement

Christian children in Colombia are in need of encouragement. Many are suffering at the hands of illegal armed groups and/or indigenous leaders who don't want Christians in their communities.

In some areas, Christian children are forcibly recruited by illegal armed groups to fight in the conflict between paramilitary groups and the army. They need to feel safe and strong enough to say no to the gangs.

While in indigenous communities, Christian families are harassed by traditional leaders who view Christians as a threat to their culture and traditions. Here, Christians may be incarcerated or tortured by the leaders. Children in these families need encouragement.

Send a message of encouragement to these children who face being recruited or send a drawing to children living in indigenous communities. Pray that the Lord will remind them of their identity in Him and that it will give them strength to stand strong.

Visit www.opendoors.org.za/write to see some Spanish phrases that you can use for your cards and artwork.



COLOMBIA

Writing/Drawing campaign ends 31 December 2019



Representative image used.

Some simple guidelines before you start writing



PRAY BEFORE YOU START

Ask God to give you the right words to write. Include one or two Bible verses. For Bible verses in other languages, visit www.biblegateway.com



SHOW SENSITIVITY

Please do not dwell on the recipient's plight or share about the blessings of life in your country.



KEEP IT SHORT AND SIMPLE

Print clearly. Write in simple English or, if you can, in the recipient's language. Short letters cost less for us to post and are easier to translate.



SECURITY

Please DO NOT MENTION OPEN DOORS in your letters, criticise a country's religion or religious extremists, its government, judicial system or political leaders. It is fine to include your name and country, but NOT your full address.



CARDS AND POSTCARDS

Colourful cards can say so much more than a long letter on plain paper. If you are writing a postcard, please send it in an envelope rather than writing Open Doors' address on the card. If you are sending more than one letter or card, please put all your letters in **one** envelope, addressed to: c/o Open Doors.



HANDMADE CARDS AND ARTWORK

Making cards is a great way of helping younger people to connect with persecuted Christians.



GIFTS

Please DO NOT include money in your letter or card as Open Doors will not be able to forward your gift. It is unsafe to do so and can cause difficulties for the recipient.



NORTH KOREA

We regret we are unable to forward written letters to believers in North Korea.



RESPECT

When writing to those in Muslim countries, please do NOT say anything negative about Islam or make references to Israel (even when using Scripture).

Remember to *continue praying* for the person you have written to as you post your cards and letters to:

**Letter Writing: Believer's Name, c/o
Open Doors, PO Box 1771, Cresta, 2118.**

If you have any queries, please contact us on 011 888 9341, or send an email to letterwriting@opendoors.org.za

**Do not forget that you can
find the latest updates, new
writing campaigns, and
additional information at
www.opendoors.org.za/write**

No more letters please

On behalf of the following persecuted believers, we would like to extend a sincere word of thanks for every letter and card written to them! These campaigns have ended, but please do continue to pray for them and their families:

- Marta, Ethiopia
- Eldos, Kyrgyzstan
- Gyang, Nigeria



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide



Open Doors South Africa