

FRONTLINE FAITH



See how you're
helping traumatised
women find healing
and peace

>>

Persecuted  But never alone.

**AUGUST
2019**

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'I'm overwhelmed with the love you showed us'

You're helping traumatised women like Aisha find healing and peace

Aisha, a young wife and mother, was filled with hatred towards her attackers. But today, Aisha can smile again thanks to generous friends like you.

One fateful night, Muslim Fulani herdsmen attacked Aisha's village in northern Nigeria. They stormed into her home and dragged her husband away, as they thought he was a pastor.

"About 10 of them remained with me and the children," says Aisha. "They demanded sex, and I pleaded that I didn't want to sleep with them. They beat me up. One of them raped me... then a second person raped me. After that, they left, taking with them everything valuable."

A few hours later, her husband returned unharmed. He saw her distress and insisted that she tell him what happened. *"In between sobs I told him what they had done to me..."*

"Wipe your tears. There's no problem [between us]," he told her. But Aisha had no peace in her heart. She hated the men who had violated her.

Thanks to your partnership, Open Doors was able to invite Aisha, and other women who've endured the same ordeal, to a trauma care programme. Through this, she started experiencing peace of mind, and the hatred she felt disappeared. *"God taught me to forgive. Right now, when I remember the incident... the hatred [is] gone."*

"If I hadn't attended this programme, I don't know how my life would've been. I would still have been in pain because there is nobody around me to strengthen and encourage me. But now that I've received this trauma healing, I'm so happy. I'm so overwhelmed with the love and compassion you showed us. ... You showed us true and genuine love."

"I've really seen the love of God. ... Even when I go back home, I want to show this love to the people around us."

Thank you for making this trauma care programme possible for Aisha and many others through your support! ☺

Q&A **How can you strengthen your sisters as persecution rises?**

In honour of Women's Month, we asked Nicci J, the women's coordinator for Open Doors, about the persecution of Christian women and how you can support your persecuted sisters in Christ to stand strong as the spiritual battle heats up...

Nicci, why do you think the persecution of women is rising immensely?

Women don't recognise the significant responsibility and power we have as women... Persecution in closed countries is rising [because] that power [of wives, mothers and daughters] is being recognised and stunted. So, the girl child is marginalised; she is educated up to a point, [she] doesn't enjoy the same privileges the boy child would enjoy.

How are women and children targeted differently compared to men?

The women I've met in Bangladesh, for example, are threatened with being kicked out of their family. The children are orphaned and taken away from their family. There are more brutal ways... girls will get raped; boys will be beaten by extremists when no one's watching. And men who want to lord their power over

those who are weaker [will] threaten them with death or will rape them in order to intimidate and paralyse them.

What more can we do to help our persecuted sisters?

You can invite Open Doors to do a presentation at your church and help wave the flag high on their behalf. Every opportunity we get... let's direct that towards asking: *Have you heard about the work of Open Doors? Have you heard about the [Christian] persecution that's happening in closed countries?* Because at the end of the day, we're not just impacting South Africa. We're not just impacting a closed country. We're expanding the Kingdom of God.

To invite Nicci or other members of the Open Doors Southern Africa team to speak at your church, ladies meeting, or other gatherings, visit www.opendoors.org.za/contact.



EGYPT

RANKING #16 | WWL SCORE 76

Region North Africa

2019 World Watch List Position
#16 (out of the top 50)Population 99 376 000
(only 10% are Christians)

Main Religion Islam

Government Presidential Republic

Sources of Persecution Islamic
oppression, ethnic antagonism
and dictatorial paranoia

PRAY

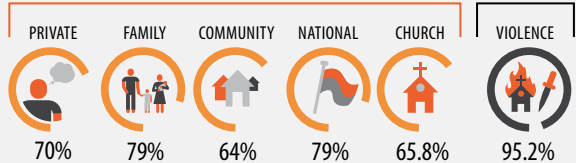
- + Pray for vulnerable Christian women and girls – that they will be protected.
- + Praise God for the work you're making possible through Open Doors' partners, by providing Christian women with literacy training and discipleship.
- + Pray for Believers from a Muslim Background who've been rejected by their families, that they'll know they're loved and accepted by God and by you.



WORLD WATCH LIST

www.opendoors.org.za/wwl

Pressure



Violence

Christian women in Egypt are often subjected to harassment, forced marriage, or marriage by abduction and sexual assault. Many of the Christian girls who are lured into marrying Muslims are underage and come from vulnerable families. Females can never leave the house by themselves and need the constant company of male relatives to protect them.

Female converts from Islam will likely be divorced by their Muslim husbands, leaving them without any financial support. The custody of their children may be taken from them, as well as inheritance rights.

In the workplace, Christian women can face double discrimination because they're both Christian and female. They can miss out on promotions and career benefits because they follow Jesus.



Pray for vulnerable Christian women and girls in Egypt – that they will be protected.

You're empowering Muslim-born women to grow in Christ!



Meet Mansuri. She was born into a Muslim family in Bangladesh, but your support helps converts like her grow in their newfound Christian faith and disciple others!

Mansuri's story: "My parents allowed me to marry a Christian but forbade me to follow Jesus. Still, I became a believer after I began visiting a prayer cell group. Our family and community put us under a lot of pressure... Because my husband was disowned, we were forced to live with my family – a blessing in disguise. My husband could show the Gospel to them, and they all became believers!"

"Jesus died for me. And He taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves. He is my inspiration. He worked for the people. I want to do the same too." – Mansuri

How you help: Thanks to your prayers and support, Mansuri joined Open Doors' Bible classes. She now has her own Bible study group for 10 women, and she discipless them with all the passion that you helped grow in her heart!



Meet Sarosa. She grew up as a Muslim in the Philippines, but meeting Jesus saved her life. See how your support helps her thrive, despite the dangers...

Sarosa's story: "My husband is a difficult man, abusive and a womaniser... I decided to take my life and that of my children. I poisoned our food and then went to the market. There I met Precious who shared the Gospel with me. I realised the mistake I'd made, and together we ran home. Fortunately, the children hadn't eaten the rice yet. Later, after my husband discovered I was a Christian, he gave me a hard time; but I persisted. In 2017, ISIS attacked our city [of Marawi]. I barely escaped with my family. Thank God, we all survived."

"I've learned that God helps even in the most difficult times. The ultimate proof that He exists and helps is that Open Doors came looking for us and supported us." – Sarosa

How you help: Thanks to the support of friends like you, Sarosa received urgent aid from Open Doors during the violent siege of Marawi. She's also been encouraged through the biblical *Standing Strong Through the Storm* seminars you help make possible. Together with you, Open Doors recently repaired her temporary shelter where she's living until she can return to her home in war-torn Marawi.

Why Christian women face DOUBLE PERSECUTION

**Research shows why your support is so
crucial to women on the front lines**

According to the latest research by Open Doors' World Watch Research Team, the ways in which Christian women experience persecution appear to be very different from the ways men are affected. Researchers found 16 "pressure points" affecting women that got no mention in the reports regarding men.

Here's just a snapshot of Open Doors' research findings, showing how women are uniquely persecuted in many places around the world:*



**The percentage of reporting countries where
rape or forced marriage is a pressure point:**



51.5%

AGAINST WOMEN



0%

AGAINST MEN

**The average number of women each day
who are raped, sexually harassed or forced
into marriage due to their Christian faith:**

6



The number of mentions of the various forms of violence against

WOMEN



MEN



27% of reporting countries (9 out of 33)

say **house arrest** is a pressure point for women. Although government imprisonment of men is more common, the house arrest reported in the research is not government imposed but family enforced. And, as such, it is another mainly invisible constraint on the female portion of a Christian community.

Persecution exploits all the available cultural vulnerabilities that women have, including:

- + Lack of access to education, health care or infrastructure
- + Forced divorce
- + Travel bans
- + Trafficking
- + Widowhood
- + Incarceration in a psychiatric unit
- + Forced abortions or contraception
- + Being denied access to work or the choice of a Christian spouse

*All stats and figures are based on 33 countries that reported on gendered violence, taken from the Top 50 countries on the 2018 World Watch List.

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church,

This month, we're honouring women in South Africa and all they've done for us and our society. We also remember and stand in solidarity with all those women who are marginalised, abused and ostracised.

Together with you, we want to especially remember our Christian sisters who are doubly vulnerable to persecution because of their faith and gender.

Let's make sure this Women's Month serves as a reminder that they may be persecuted but they are *never alone*.

That's why we've changed the look of this newsletter to help launch the ***Never Alone Campaign***. This campaign is your opportunity to draw closer to your persecuted brothers and sisters. And it's a catalyst for us all – as the body of Christ – to draw closer to one another.

As much as you and I care, sometimes we may feel disconnected from our persecuted family because we can't relate to all the extreme circumstances they face for the name of Christ.

But when we consider all things, what truly matters is that we serve the same

God, the God for whom many of them are being rejected and isolated.

And maybe you can relate to feeling isolated or alone.

As a Christian, whether you live in a free country or a closed country, whether you are the most persecuted or the least persecuted, you have this wonderful truth to encourage you...

When you're a part of the body of Christ, you're never alone.

So join us as we reflect on, celebrate and spread the truth that believers may be persecuted but we are **NEVER ALONE!**

And let's do all we can together through our prayers and support to reassure our persecuted family that they're not alone, because God cares and we're standing with them.

Together in His service,



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