

FRONTLINE FAITH



Give hope to
remind persecuted
Christians that
they're never
alone >>>

Never alone campaign 

Standing with Persecuted Christians Under Greatest Threat

DECEMBER
2019

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You showed Apo that he's 'Never Alone'. Thank you!

You wouldn't know it when you see him laughing and playing at the park, but Apo (full name Abraham) and his family have suffered so much in Syria for the sake of Jesus. When Apo was just one year old, his father was kidnapped for being a Christian... they haven't seen him since.

Apo spent the first three years of his life unable to speak due to the trauma of losing his father. Even today, as his mother shares, Apo struggles with the fear of abandonment:

"Apo sometimes says to me, 'Mom, you're so compassionate towards me, I love you so much, don't leave me.' When I get ill, he takes good care of me. Because he lost his father, he's afraid of losing me too."

But Apo and his mother weren't left alone – because friends like you stood with them through your vital gifts and prayers. Now seven years old, Apo has a sparkle in his eye that you helped put there!

Your support helps sustain the Open Doors-operated *Centre of Hope* in Aleppo, where Apo and his mom receive vital relief aid, medical care, trauma counselling – and where Apo attends educational classes and Bible activities for children. *"At school he is one of the best, praise God! I'm very happy."*

Beyond Syria, countless Christian children across the world just like Apo are struggling to overcome the effects of persecution. Through your prayers and generosity, you're standing with them and their families to show them that they're never alone.



That's why your continued prayers to help reach a R10 872 000 goal in the 2019–2020 Never Alone Campaign are so vital. Together, we can bring hope and practical support to even more persecuted children like Apo – so they know they're not alone.

Visit www.neveralone.co.za to give a gift today and help children like Apo have a future and hope despite the challenges they face because of their Christian faith.

And on behalf of the many children you're helping, thank you!

Reading, writing and Jesus!

Christian children in Egypt face discrimination because of their faith. That's why support from friends like you for Open Doors' children's ministry is such a blessing. You're helping persecuted young people through literacy classes, Bible lessons and other fun activities to become strong, educated children who know who they are in Christ.

Here are a few children's stories shared by a fieldworker who witnessed the transformations you helped make possible:

Representative images used.



"Sara didn't know how to read and write and had no confidence at all. When I hugged her, she kept crying and said she didn't deserve to be hugged and that she was a failure. You [won't] recognise Sara nowadays. **[Through Open Doors' educational course for children] she can read and write and does much better at school.**"



"Boules came from a poor Christian family [and] had to leave school to help bring in [an] income. I convinced [his parents] to let Boules go back to school. We helped the family survive financially. Boules didn't only attend regular school, he also came to our educational courses. **He started to make friends and improved a lot in his studies.** He has been going to school ever since."



"Mina was stubborn and aggressive with his friends. He hated girls because they reminded him of his sister, who was smarter than him. Mina couldn't read or write. We invited Mina [to] our educational course. It took a long time, but his behaviour changed. He started to love his sister and treat her and her friends nicely. **He became a calmer [child] and respected his friends instead of fighting with them.**"

Thanks to you, children like Sara, Boules and Mina are given the basic human right to an education through Open Doors' education courses. Your partnership helps our fieldworkers *"improve [the children's] educational level [and] other aspects of their lives"* and *"provide them with the love they need [to restore] their self-confidence."*

COLOMBIA

RANKING #47 | WWL SCORE 58

Region South America

2019 World Watch List Position

#47 out of top 50

Population 49 465 000

(95% are Christians)

Main Religion Christianity

(Roman Catholic)

Government Republic

Sources of Persecution

Organised corruption and crime

PRAY

- + For the children living and studying in homes run by Open Doors – many are there for their safety as their families have experienced violent persecution
- + For protection for those reaching out to gang members with the Gospel and that many gang members would turn to Christ
- + For provision for indigenous Christians forced out of their communities



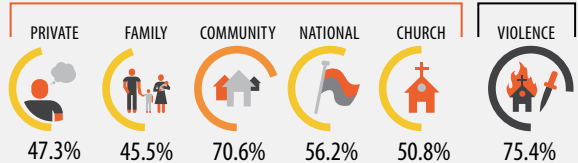
WORLD WATCH LIST

www.opendoors.org.za/wwl

*Source: "Save the Children Report: Stolen Childhoods," 2017.

Pressure

Violence



Colombia is one of the top 10 countries where children suffer most from conflict and has one of the highest rates of child homicide.* In areas under the control of criminal groups, children tend to be forcefully recruited and indoctrinated. The guerrilla indoctrination of children affects Christian girls more, since they not only have to accept the violent ideologies imposed on them, but it's also highly likely that they become victims of rape and sexual abuse. Christians and church leaders who try to prevent young people from joining these groups, or share the Gospel with gang members, suffer harassment, abduction and extortion... some are even killed.

While in indigenous communities, Christian parents are likely threatened if they're found raising their children according to the Christian faith. They then face fines, detentions, possible eviction from the community and even the loss of custody of their children.



You give persecuted children HOPE



The indigenous Christian community of northern Colombia suffers religious persecution, violence and abandonment – all because they're seen as “betraying” the traditional beliefs of their communities.

Childhood in these communities of Colombia is hard enough, with children beginning to accompany their parents to work around the age of six. That means they spend long hours in the fields cutting wood, cultivating the land and caring for animals – all to help generate income for the family.

But this reality becomes even harsher for children if they're Christians.

That's what Mateo* (17) faced every day. Believers like him in northern Colombia live under the strain of constant scrutiny and harassment. And they're often denied access to basic resources, health services and education.

“There was no way to study, since the only schools are those controlled by the indigenous authorities. In those schools you can't be a Christian or read the Bible,” explains Mateo.

But all that changed thanks to the support from compassionate believers like you. Mateo was given a new lease on life at La Casita, a home for indigenous children who are persecuted for their faith. He took part in multiple education programmes, vocational training, pastoral guidance and even musical training.

Now, Mateo dreams of going to university!

“He'll be the first indigenous Christian from his tribe to have a degree. He'll be able to break the myth that indigenous Christians can't go to university and will be a beautiful example for other indigenous people,” shares Javier,* who manages the Open Doors La Casita refuge home.

“I feel very proud of Mateo. In him, our community and our family have high hopes,” Agustina,* his mother, proudly exclaims.

Your support is helping protect Colombian children from the violence of persecution, the high vulnerability of their communities and the sexual violence exercised by some traditional leaders against children. Mateo and the other children at La Casita are moving steadily towards their purpose in God, thanks to you.

*Names changed for security reasons.

Let your persecuted family hear from you



The greatest gift you can give a persecuted Christian is the knowledge that they're not alone. By writing to your persecuted family, you help remind them of this, and you fill them with hope and joy.

Today, you can encourage Florence (13), who 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've 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)."

Would you please share some words of strength and courage with Florence in a letter today? Your quick note of love will mean more to her than you can imagine.

Post your letters or send your emails to:

Florence, c/o Open Doors SA,
P.O. Box 1771, Cresta 2118 **or**
letterwriting@opendoors.org.za.

And please pray that God will continue to give Florence peace when she feels afraid.

The Family of God thanks you!

You may not be able to physically sit with your persecuted brothers and sisters and hear about how much your support means to them. But know that your love and kindheartedness doesn't go unnoticed. They're overwhelmed by each letter written, prayer spoken, visit made and gift given on their behalf.

Africa



"I thank God for your programmes and that there are people abroad, in all the corners of the world, that have stood by us and prayed for the Church and the people of God in all their situations, sorrows and bondage. Through their prayers, people are stronger and moving on. We have moved forward in unity."

– Mary,* Sunday school teacher,
East Africa

Middle East



"I want to thank all of you who helped us get through this situation. Without your support, in prayer and funds, our people wouldn't have been resilient enough to stay. Your support has empowered the Church in Iraq. We will never forget what you have done for us. We might forget those who persecuted us, but we will not forget those who stood with us in our time of need."

– Father Daniel, Iraq

Asia



"To each and every one of [you], we might not see [you], but as Christians, as people of God, we daily bring [you] to the feet of Jesus Christ in our prayers. And we thank [you] for [your] sacrifice, and [your] support, [your] love for us. [You] have a big heart in praying for us, in giving to us and in helping us in many ways. We thank [you] so much."

– Abishek,* Open Doors local partner who cares for our persecuted brothers and sisters in India

Latin America



"It's an honour for me that you pray for my life so that God will give me the courage to follow my path. You are gifts from God. Your prayers are a gesture of love from the Lord."

– Abraham,* teenager from the Open Doors Children's Centre, Colombia

*Names changed and representative images used for security reasons.

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church,

As a grandfather, I tear up when I hear of children suffering at the hands of persecution.

Sadly, in places where faith costs the most, children often suffer because of their choice to follow Jesus, or they're discriminated against because of their parents' decision to follow Jesus.

The stories of Apo (page 2) and Mateo (page 5) breaks my heart. When I think of all that they've endured as young people, all I want to do is be there, take them in my arms and hug them so that they know that they are not alone. But as I can't do this, I will do my utmost in prayer and support to let them know that they are not alone.

And I'm so grateful to you for doing the same through your partnership and prayers.

Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these"* (Mark 10:14).

That's exactly what you do when you stand with Open Doors to help protect these children and encourage them in their walk with Jesus. Together, we become Christ's open arms to them – drawing them in so they can grow closer to Him.

Thank you for supporting our brothers, sisters and children who are persecuted for the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And as we continue the 2019–2020 *Never Alone* Campaign, thank you for any gift God leads you to give today to help meet the R10 872 000 goal and stand with Christians under greatest threat.

May you and your family enjoy a blessed and joyous festive season!

Together in His service,

Jan Gouws
Executive Director
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