



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted **Christians** worldwide

FRONTLINE FAITH



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

Never alone campaign 

Standing with Persecuted Christians Under Greatest Threat

**JANUARY
2020**

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You're showing this Syrian mom and her son that you care!

A picture sits in Jina's living room showing one of the happiest days of her life, the day she married Rober. They were supposed to grow old together but all Jina has now are memories of Rober and the life they shared before it was all torn from them.

Jina and Rober got married in 2011 and in 2012, they welcomed their son Apo into their lives. *"We were very happy with our son, Apo; we were dreaming about his future,"* shares Jina. *"My husband and [I] could only celebrate together his first birthday in 2013; after that Rober was kidnapped."*

Apo's father was abducted while travelling by bus to Qamishli, carrying a large amount of money. But the reason that he was taken wasn't the money – it was his Christian faith. *"When I heard that my husband was kidnapped, I suffered a lot; my in-laws suffered too."*


Another Christian man, Elie, who was kidnapped with Rober, was released after his family paid a large ransom. He told Jina that *"they told Rober to convert to Islam. But Rober refused and said, 'I have my God and that is who I stand for.'"*

It's been a difficult road for Jina, who says, *"It's so hard to be alone. It's hard to raise our boy alone. People tell me that I should try to find work, but where can I leave my son?"*

How does Jina survive as a single mother in war-torn Syria, not knowing whether or not her husband is alive?

"My faith in God is very big. I say to Him 'O Lord, as you like, may Your will be done. O Lord, I just ask you to return my husband safe and sound.'"

Both Jina and Apo are so grateful for friends like you helping to provide the comfort and support that they need to survive through the ministry work of their local Open Doors' Centre of Hope. These centres which are run by local churches offers people like Jina physical, psychological or social support through various activities as well as spiritual support.

Thank you for reminding this brave mother and her son that they're never alone! 

Never alone campaign 

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“You held me when I cried”

Your support helps Muslim women like Amina stay strong

Amina* (now 48) from the East African islands was a school girl when she first heard about Christ. And the older she got, the more she realised that Islam couldn't answer her deepest spiritual questions.

While travelling abroad, her tour group visited a church. A fellow Muslim warned her not to enter or she'd go to hell. But she decided to risk it. Inside, she asked, *“God, if you are here, show yourself to me.”*

That night, she heard a voice say, *“Don't be sad; you haven't taken the wrong path.”*

Amina surrendered her life to Christ, and when she made her conversion known, the trouble began.

When Amina arranged a ceremony for her deceased mother, her father *“told me I was no longer his daughter. He threw rocks at me and said harsh things.”*

It was painful, but Amina says, *“I didn't give up the faith... I had to tell my family members about Jesus and encourage them to believe in Him.”*

Your support helps make it possible for Amina to stay in her Muslim nation and share the Gospel with others: *“Because of the persecution, I wanted to run away and leave my family. Without your support I wouldn't have been here anymore.”*

She's grateful to you and all her Open Doors family *“for all you did to comfort me. You held me when I cried and encouraged me that I will be surprised at the plans God has for me. Your words comforted and strengthened me.”*

Thank you for helping women like Amina know they're never alone!

AFGHANISTAN

RANKING #2 | WWL SCORE 93

**Region** South Asia**2020 Ranking** #2 out of 50**Main Religion** Islam
(less than 1% are Christian)**Government** Presidential
Islamic Republic**Source of Persecution**
Islamic oppression

Afghan believers must keep their faith completely secret. Afghanistan is a tribal society, and loyalty to your family, clan and tribe is important. Leaving Islam is seen as a betrayal to the family and community. Secret believers who are discovered may be sent to a mental hospital: their families believe no sane person would leave Islam. They may also be beaten or even killed by family members or extremists like the Taliban.

Since women are at the bottom of the social ladder, they're prone to even more harassment if they convert to Christianity. They can be sold into slavery or prostitution, forced to marry much older men, deprived of food and water and healthcare, locked into rooms, beaten severely, burned or sexually mishandled.

As you're a trusted prayer partner, please pray for:

- + Christian parents, who often hide their faith from their children for fear of discovery – pray that they will find ways to share the Gospel with them.
- + The protection of Christians in Afghanistan, especially Christian women who face further pressure and harassment if their faith is discovered.
- + Wisdom for those working to support secret Afghan believers.



WORLD WATCH LIST

www.opendoors.org.za/wwl

"God has lifted us!"

Saba's cafeteria helps her family survive, thanks to you!

All the Christians in Saba's* village in India face discrimination because of their faith. So when Saba started a roadside cafeteria after her husband died and she needed to take care of her three children, she says the "people from our community laughed at us; we were so poor and this business barely helped us earn a basic living."

But "now, by the grace of God, we have a proper place to sell food and are able to make a profit. God has lifted us!"

The cafeteria which she started is helping other women as well – including three widows and a woman whose husband left her because she became a Christian.

The prayers and gifts from believers like you have helped these women to renovate the cafeteria, buy utensils and pay the rent so they can support their families.

"I'm amazed that we are able to earn so much more for our families now because of the utensils given by your team. Thank you... this is a great blessing for us.

"When your organisation helped, our profits increased. Now we can save some money and provide for our families' needs."

Thank you for helping this persecuted group of women earn a living. Your support is a reflection of Christ's love to those in need.

*Name changed for security purposes.



See what one woman discovered in China when she travelled with Open Doors!

Jana, who is an Open Doors' supporter, says:

"Last year, I travelled with Open Doors Southern Africa on an encouragement trip to China. The Chinese people were friendly – and always on their smartphones.

"It was clear that everyone was on some kind of (sanctioned) social media app. Posting, writing, searching, watching, buying – all consumed in their devices. Research shows that social media use can lead to loneliness, envy, anxiety, depression and a lack of social skills.

"After spending some time with the Chinese Christian women during our visit, many admitted that they felt unworthy, not beautiful enough, insecure and unsure of who they're meant to be. Though we're worlds apart, it was easy to relate to their fears and insecurities.

"I hope you will join me in praying for these Chinese women and all young Christian women who are trying to find their way in the world. Pray that they may always seek their identity in the Lord and that they'll not lose sight of how *'fearfully and wonderfully'* they are made. (Psalm 139:14)."

You can travel with Open Doors too – on a secret mission!

Join us as we go on a secret mission to the persecuted Church.

See pages 7–10 for travel opportunities this year!



Representative image used.

Tourists / on a Secret Mission

**“Make every effort to come to me soon”
2 Timothy 4:9**



Are you ready for a life-changing experience? >>

TRAVEL with Open Doors in 2020

Do you like adventure? When you read our stories of your persecuted brothers and sisters in closed countries, do you desire to hold their hands, encourage them, meet them in person? Do you want to make a difference in their lives?

You can become a tourist on a secret mission!

Join us as we travel to pray, see, learn, comfort, encourage and deliver much-needed resources to our persecuted family. Your presence will make a huge difference in their lives.

Get ready for a life-changing experience in which you'll not only help strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters in these countries, but also your own faith as you encounter our family, hear their stories firsthand, and see how God is at work amidst the darkness.

Whether you go on a prayer, encouragement or delivery trip – you will come back changed.

Are you ready? See where you can go and make a difference>>



BASE TRIPS 2020*



A base trip is led by workers of Open Doors Southern Africa. You will travel with a team from South Africa to the destination country.

Southeast Asia MARCH

(Prayer and Encouragement Trip)

The persecution in this country has risen significantly over the past few years as the situation for Christians continues to deteriorate. This country needs your prayers! On this trip, you may have the opportunity to meet and encourage persecuted believers. You will be taken to strategic areas in the country, where you will participate in prayer walks.



Vietnam JUNE (Prayer and Encouragement Trip)

This trip will give you the opportunity to meet with church leaders, attend church services and see firsthand how the Church in Vietnam is responding to persecution. You will visit projects of Open Doors, as well as pray for and encourage those who serve the Church in Vietnam.



Cuba JULY (Delivery Trip)

The Church in Cuba needs Bibles and other resources. On this trip, you will be expected to take much-needed resources into this country.

Colombia SEPTEMBER

(Prayer and Encouragement Trip)

On this trip you will interact with and teach young believers the value of prayer. You will live at a safe house established for children who are victims of persecution, and whose family members have been threatened, killed or ousted from their towns and villages because of their faith in Christ.



Middle East NOVEMBER (Encouragement Trip)

This trip will give you the opportunity to visit projects and programmes designed to rebuild Christian communities destroyed by Islamic State. You will pray with and encourage those who are returning to this country to rebuild their lives. You will also have an opportunity to learn and understand the factors contributing to persecution in the country.

*Exact dates and costs are available on further enquiry. For security reasons, we don't publish it here.

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS 2020*



You can also join our international trips, where you will travel with Christians from all over the world to the destination country. These trips are led by Open Doors workers from other countries.

Israel (Encouragement)

The main purpose of the trip is to create awareness of the situation of Christians living in specified areas. The programme will include meeting with the local Body, visiting projects, taking advantage of prayer opportunities, providing encouragement and experiencing some biblical sightseeing opportunities.



Bangladesh (Encouragement)

The main purpose of this trip is to pray for and encourage believers who have come to Christ from another faith background. You will learn to understand the persecution dynamics in the country and have the opportunity to visit some projects supported by Open Doors.



North Asia (Prayer)

Go on a prayer trip to one of the countries in Asia where Christians are most persecuted. This trip will allow you to pray for many brothers and sisters who are isolated and afraid to live out their faith. Open Doors offers up to four departure dates per year.

Note: Country to be disclosed upon enquiry

China (Prayer and Encouragement)

China's churches must walk a fine line between their faith and their allegiance to their country. Pray with and encourage those who must walk this line every day. Learn more about the dynamics of the persecution our brothers and sisters face in this country.



Colombia Graduation (Encouragement – youth)

Meet young believers who've had the opportunity to be educated and nurtured in a safe house. Come and witness the happy event of their graduation. Pray and encourage their families who travel from far and wide. Many families are pastors' families who face persecution because of their work among indigenous tribes and from the guerrilla groups operating in the outlying areas of Colombia.

*Please note dates and costs are available on further enquiry. For security reasons, we don't publish it here.

THE NEW **WORLD WATCH LIST** IS COMING

Every January, Open Doors releases its annual World Watch List, which ranks the top 50 countries where Christians face extreme persecution for the faith.

The Open Doors World Watch List is:

- **UNIQUE.**

It uses real-world data from experts on the ground. No other list covers so much of the world so thoroughly.

- **COMPREHENSIVE.**

The list tracks violence and measures how much freedom Christians have in their private, family, community, national and church life.

- **RELIABLE.**

The list has a record for credible, dependable information. It's independently audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom.

Why the World Watch List matters:

Millions of Christians around the world are persecuted for their faith. They face a daily struggle against oppressive laws, extreme violence or rejection by family and society. Some are in prison or labour camps. Many keep their faith hidden. All of them pay a price for following Jesus.

How the World Watch List will empower your prayers and encourage you:

- **It shows you that the Church is alive and active.**

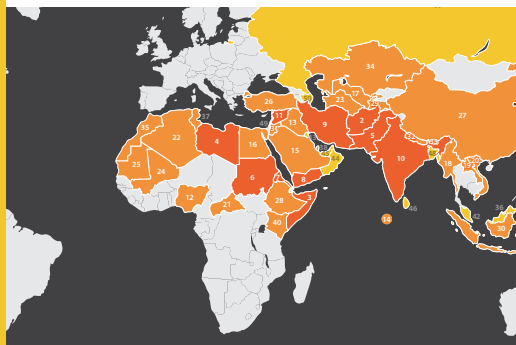
Persecution happens where the Church is actively sharing the Gospel and living it out. So these are not just places of fear; they are furnaces of faith.

- **It inspires you to action.**

The list inspires us to keep our persecuted brothers' and sisters' faith alive by praying, giving and speaking up on their behalf.

- **It stops us from taking our freedom for granted.**

The list reminds us not to be complacent about our freedom, but to share our own faith with courage like our persecuted family who risk everything for the faith.



Visit OpenDoors.org.za/wwl on 15 January to view the 2020 World Watch List.

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church,

A new year is here, the year 2020. Some are calling it the year of 2020 vision. Interestingly, eye specialists say that having 20/20 vision actually means that you can see what an average person can see – it's not perfect vision.

Talking about vision, what do we see when we look at the year ahead for persecuted Christians – and especially the Christian women whom you'll see celebrated in this newsletter?

I foresee that in countries where we work, women will still be vulnerable, rejected, abducted, raped and killed. But despite this, they'll still share the Gospel with their families, protect their pastors and be caretakers of the future generation. They'll be resilient in the face of harsh circumstances.

Now, in this final month of our three-month *Never Alone* Campaign, we focus on these precious women who are under fire for following Jesus. As you get a glimpse of their boldness and bravery in these pages, and how your support helps them, I'm sure

you'll be proud to call them your mothers and sisters in the Body of Christ.

Matthew 13:16 says, "*But blessed are your eyes because they see.*" As you read their stories, may you see and be moved to action to pray for and support our persecuted family.

I pray that you'll be moved to partner with us in this final month to help reach our R10 872 000 *Never Alone* Campaign goal. Please pray and see how God would lead you today to assist your family in Christ.

In this new year, I pray that our Lord will make your path clear and make you strong and courageous for the road ahead. May His love, grace and gifts flow freely through you as you serve Him in this year.

Together in His service,



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