

Open*Doors* NEWSLETTER

Persecuted  But never alone.



**Protect Christians
in the Muslim World
this Ramadan**

**Help meet the
R600 000 need to
strengthen nearly
163 million believers**

**MAY/JUNE
2020**

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You're helping Christians proclaim the Gospel

The Islamic holy month of Ramadan is the most sacred month of the year in Islamic culture. It's often a difficult time for believers living in Muslim-majority regions, especially those with a Muslim background who feel intense pressure from their Muslim community to return to Islam.

Yet in Indonesia, one group of Believers from a Muslim Background (BMBs) find it to be the perfect time to share the Gospel with Muslims. Samir* is part of this group that tries to find ways to be a blessing to their community during Ramadan.

Since Samir and his wife found salvation in Jesus, they've faced a constant barrage of intimidation and threats. *"The local Muslims would come to my house and force us to fast and pray, since we don't show up at the mosque anymore. It gets worse during Ramadan,"* he says.

Thankfully, your support enables Samir with persecution preparedness training, to help him stand strong amid this pressure. He learned how to face persecution in a biblical way and respond to his persecutors with love and truth.

Every week, Samir and other local BMBs attend a discipleship class, where they're reaffirmed in the truth that as followers of Jesus, they must always share God's love with unbelievers, even when they face increased pressure and persecution during Ramadan.


The members of this group aren't wealthy, so they give their time and energy to bless their community. Being out among their neighbours also provides them with



Representative image used.

an opportunity to share the Gospel with the many Muslims who don't fast, even though it's compulsory during Ramadan. Amazingly, the reception to the Gospel during this Muslim holy month has been surprisingly positive, with men and women giving their lives to Jesus and seeking baptism every year!

Praise the Lord for these new believers and for those brave brothers and sisters who share the Gospel during this season. Please pray that God will open more doors this Ramadan for believers like Samir to bear even greater witness to Christ.

And thank you for standing with BMBs in Indonesia and elsewhere in the Muslim World – through your support we are able to protect, equip and encourage our brothers and sisters during times of heightened danger. 

*Name changed for security purposes.



YOUR PRAYERS MATTER!

How can we show Christ's love to Muslims during Ramadan?

The answer begins with prayer. Through your generous support, you've shown true love and commitment to believers facing persecution around the world – and with Ramadan underway from 24 April to 24 May, your prayers for our brothers and sisters in Muslim-majority regions are vital.

They not only need your prayers for their protection and comfort during this time of heightened persecution, but also so they'll be empowered to reach others for Christ.

So will you commit to pray and fast just one day during this season and ask the Lord to shine His light into the darkness? Together, we can unleash a mighty movement of God's power.

Here's how you can pray during this critical month:

- Pray that as Muslims spend more time in prayer and meditation, the Lord would help them understand that they can only find salvation in Jesus.
- Pray for churches to find ways to share the love of Christ with Muslim neighbours during Ramadan and for the Gospel to be preached boldly.
- Pray that Christians would emulate Christ's love to Muslims and BMBs in their communities. *Many BMBs share that it was the love of Jesus that drew them to Christianity.*
- Pray for the Lord's Spirit to be at work among Islamic radical groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, Islamic State in the Middle East and many others across the world – binding the darkness and calling out members into God's truth.
- Pray that support will pour in to help continue to protect, equip and encourage believers in the Muslim World.

Abdallah is growing in Christ and advancing the Kingdom thanks to you!



At 60 years old, Abdallah* is one of the oldest participants of Open Doors partner-organised discipleship training in North Africa. He still remembers the fear that plagued his life before he came to faith in Christ.

"Before I met Jesus, I was a Muslim leading a gloomy life filled with fear of death... I was scared, and I couldn't find peace," Abdallah says.

That fear began to fade when Abdallah stumbled upon a Christian programme on television. He just wanted to find something interesting to watch – what God brought him was life changing! Abdallah eventually gave his life to Jesus through this programme, and it wasn't long after that his wife and children also became Christians.

"I remember I felt joy and peace at that time but mostly inner peace. As I was set free from all false things, I was reborn."

To see Abdallah today, you wouldn't know that he'd spent decades locked in fear and depression. Jesus transformed his life and the lives of his entire family! Unfortunately, becoming a Christian

in North Africa comes with a price. His siblings rejected him and his family for their faith, and they were isolated by their entire community.

But your support helps Abdallah stand strong through Open Doors discipleship training, so he can shine the light of Christ to the community that rejects him.

"It's so important to study and understand [the Bible] together," he says. *"If this stops, everything stops. The devil will seize the opportunity. We would find ourselves in the darkness again."*

Although it's not easy being a Christian in a Muslim-majority nation, Abdallah never thought of returning to Islam. *"I have always said that even if they [put] a knife [to] my throat, I couldn't say that Jesus doesn't exist."*

Thank you for helping Abdallah grow in God's Word and go deeper in his faith! Through the support of friends like you, believers like Abdallah are being equipped through discipleship training to advance God's Kingdom where faith costs the most.

*Name changed for security purposes.

Testimonies of faith

The most amazing thing about the harsh reality of Christian persecution in the Muslim World is that Muslims continue to come to faith in Jesus despite the cost!

Here are just a few powerful words from Believers from a Muslim Background who won't turn their backs on Christ:

"I was very clear with my family about my faith. I told them I'm with Christ and that nothing in the world would make me change my mind. My God has been sustaining me since then, so I fear nothing."

Achiam*, a blind, 20-year-old Christian rejected by her family.



"Nothing can equal the life that Jesus gave to me."

Kabil*, a 40-year-old believer responding to the ultimatum to either reject Jesus or lose his family.



"Jesus is like oxygen, because without oxygen you can't breathe. If Jesus was not in my life, I wouldn't be alive... No matter what happens in my life, I can't leave Jesus."

Islem*, a 22-year-old who found hope in Christ when she met a group of Christians after attempting suicide.



These are just a few of the many stories pouring in every day of Muslims finding life in Jesus and never looking back. Thank you for supporting these persecuted brothers and sisters through your gifts and prayers. You're helping them have unwavering faith!

*Names changed for security purposes.

Meet them on the front lines



If you've been inspired by the stories in this newsletter and want to know about other ways you can stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters, look no further!

Now more than ever our persecuted brothers and sisters need to know that they're not alone, as many are in deep despair because of the impact of the current pandemic. You can show your love and support to these brave believers by visiting the countries where they live to pray and minister on the front lines of faith.

Here are two opportunities* for you to visit the persecuted Church with Open Doors this year:

Bangladesh:

4-9 November 2020

You'll pray for and encourage believers who've come to Christ from another faith background.

Iraq:

12-19 November 2020

You'll stand with Christians who are returning to this country to rebuild their lives after devastating violence and war.



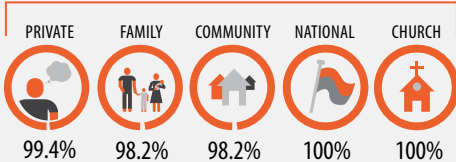
You can't imagine the encouragement you'll bring to believers when you journey with Open Doors to meet them right in the midst of their struggles. And you won't believe how God works in your life to ignite your own faith through this experience. So please don't miss out on this opportunity! Email travel@opendoors.org.za to find out more.



YEMEN

RANKING #8 | WWL SCORE 85

Pressure



Violence

VIOLENCE



15.5%

Region Arabian Peninsula

2020 Ranking #8 out of 50

Main Religion Islam
(less than 1% are Christian)

Government Islamic Republic

Source of Persecution
Islamic oppression

Leaving Islam is illegal in Yemen, and Believers from a Muslim Background can face the death penalty.

Yemen is a strongly Islamic nation. There is no room for either public church activities or private worship. The ongoing civil war, which has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in recent memory, has also allowed radical Islamic groups to expand their operations in certain areas, leading to Christians being abducted and killed.

While the number of believers in Yemen is growing, most must keep their faith a complete secret. They could also be attacked or killed by family members if their faith is discovered.

Here's how you can pray this month:

- + Pray for provision for Christians, who are often denied access to emergency aid.
- + Pray that Yemeni believers will have the courage to share their faith despite opposition.
- + Pray for peace in Yemen and a future when believers can freely worship God.



Representative images used.

WORLD WATCH LIST

www.opendoors.org.za/wwl

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear Partner of the persecuted Church

Open Doors' founder, Brother Andrew, made it clear throughout his ministry that we aren't against anyone, we're pro-Jesus. He also said that the word ISLAM is an acronym for I Sincerely Love All Muslims.

Our ministry in Islamic countries is based on this love. We strengthen the Church in these countries to reflect the love of Jesus in their countries. Our focus is to reach Christians and non-Christians. We do this by strengthening believers to be salt and light in their countries.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and with Ramadan underway this month, Christians are doubly vulnerable to persecution and starvation. It's important that we pray urgently, not only for our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also for Muslims. Christians face increasing pressure to return to Islam and are the last to be assisted during the pandemic, while Muslims are more open to the Gospel as they seek the truth.

May our Christian family be able to say like Paul in Philippians 4:10: *"I'm glad in God, far happier than you would ever guess – happy that you're again showing such strong concern for me. Not that you ever quit praying and thinking about me."* (MSG)

We need to get drawn into the spiritual battle with those who are fighting on the front lines of our faith, declaring the goodness of God to those who are lost, so that they too may come to know the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

Unite with us in prayer this month for our brothers and sisters in the Muslim World and Muslims as they observe Ramadan during this unprecedented time. Thank you for all your prayers and support!

Together in His service



Jan Gouws
Executive Director
Open Doors Southern Africa



Partner with us this month in helping protect and encourage believers in the Muslim World during Ramadan. Scan* the QR code to give a gift.

*To give you can use your phone's camera, a QR code reader app or visit www.opendoors.org.za/secretchurch.



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