

Open*Doors* NEWSLETTER

Persecuted  But never alone.



**SEPTEMBER/
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Representative image used.

Thank you for helping equip Christian parents

No matter where in the world you live, raising children is a great privilege but also hard work – while raising godly children is even harder. So we try our best to help them build a firm foundation for their Christian faith from a young age, hoping that they'll continue to walk with the Lord when they grow older.

Unfortunately, parents in the Middle East, Arabian Peninsula and North Africa face pressure when trying to bring up their children in a Christian home, especially if they're Believers from a Muslim Background.

"While the extended family is a blessing, children end up being parented by multiple adults who often have different ideas and approaches [to that of Christian parents]," says Irene*, a mother and blogger from the Middle East.

Many parents rely on the Church to teach their children Christian values, while secret believers must raise their children in isolation. *"So there's a lack of knowledge about parenting based on Christian values"* says our coordinator, Felix*.


In Palestine, Marc says: *"Our numbers are*

going down. Many people are afraid about the future of the Church – will there still be a Church in years' [to come]?"

All of this requires that parents have a good biblical foundation in order to build up the next generation of Christians so they can continue to be a light for Christ.

Thankfully we're able to provide these parents with much-needed online training and resources to help them grow in their biblical parenting skills. These skills help them to teach their children Christian values as they grow up in Islamic environments.

One of the ways we're doing this is through blogs that are written by parents about real-life experiences connected to Kingdom values. *"Your programme changed our family life, we do things differently now,"* says one parent.

Thank you for making this vital training available to persecuted Christian parents. You're helping them raise the next generation of the Church by equipping them with biblical skills to help ground their children in the faith. 

*Names changed for security purposes.



Visit www.OpenDoors.org.za/goh to see how you can teach parents biblical parenting skills to help them raise their children.

The Word is coming alive in some of the darkest places



Do you remember when you were given your first Bible? Maybe you were still a child or maybe not. Either way, it was probably very special.

Have you ever wondered about our persecuted brothers and sisters who often can't own their own Bible or even a Bible in their language because it's too dangerous?

A Malaysian believer, Reina*, who has lived in poverty her whole life, met Jesus when our local partner gave her a copy of the New Testament in her language. The more she read the Bible, the more she loved Jesus.

She desperately longed for her husband and three illiterate sons to share this love. But no matter how hard she tried to explain it to them, they couldn't understand her fascination with Christ.

Her prayers were eventually answered through our partner, who gave her the New Testament Bible. She was given a USB drive with an audio Bible, a PDF Bible and videos of the four Gospels in her language, which she would play while cooking or working in her shop.

One day after playing the USB, her youngest son asked who Jesus is. She had to hold back the tears, flooding her eyes.

She's grateful for the opportunity you helped make possible through your support to share the Gospel with her family.

"You've brought colour into my grey life," she says of this wonderful gift you've helped give her. "You're a blessing to me. I'm invisible to my neighbours, yet God sees me and helps me through people like you."

Thank you for helping make the Bible come alive in the lives of Reina and her family by supporting Open Doors. Your support helps provide believers in the most dangerous parts of the world with digital Bibles.

*Name changed for security purposes.

Q&A

with an Open Doors trauma counsellor

Many persecuted Christians face trauma. In Iran, for example, dozens of Christians imprisoned for their faith suffer from trauma when released. We spoke to our trauma counsellor, Tina*, about her work among refugee ex-prisoners. This is what she had to say:

What drives you to do this work?

I believe that we're God's community, and we have different roles and gifts to give to each other. I believe God is the healer and He wants to help us thrive, not just survive... I see changed lives. I see God is in charge, and He wants to touch and heal. I feel fulfilled and privileged to be a tool in His hands.

Why does Open Doors organise this training? Why is this important?

When persecution takes place, it changes a person forever. When we consider persecution... I've heard many refugees say that life as a refugee is much harder. It's like a prison without bars in which they feel trapped.

The people we help are also the parents of the next generation of believers, as well as the face of the Church. Helping them is helping the persecuted Church.

Can you share the impact of this training? What are the people like at the beginning and the end of sessions?

Trauma is stored somatically in the body. [This] plays out in the sensory networks and nervous system. Most ex-prisoners suffer from somatic pains, backaches, headaches, etc. After the groups had the training, there is a significant reduction in body aches.

They [also] feel isolated, lonely, angry, bitter, weak, homesick and hopeless. When they see that they're not alone and that others are facing similar problems, it brings normality to the situation. They talk, share and learn from each other and, most of all, feel connected.

*Name changed for security purposes.

See how you can provide emotional and practical support to persecuted Christians.

Visit OpenDoors.org.za/goh

Thank you for empowering Christian girls and women in Egypt

Gender-based violence is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world, and the United Nations estimates that it affects one in every three women. In our own country, it's a widespread problem that our president has termed the *second pandemic*.

Our persecuted Christian sisters are no strangers to this violence. They're doubly vulnerable because of their gender and their Christian faith. In places like Egypt, it seems inescapable. Here, the danger of being kidnapped or harassed is an everyday worry for women, girls and their parents.

Imagine waiting for your 21-year-old daughter to return from the shop. As time passes, you get worried and reach for the phone to call her. Instead of your daughter's voice, an aggressive male voice answers: *"Don't call again, she's never coming home."*

This happened to a widowed father. His daughter Maggie was one of many girls who disappeared in 2018. But she was one of the ones who were lucky enough to be reunited with her family. Many never return home.

Although the number of kidnappings has decreased slightly, Melissa*, our girls' ministry leader, says: *"Radical Muslim cells spread their spider's net around [Christian girls and women] to kidnap them and force them into Islamic marriages."*

They target young Christian girls with low self-esteem and groom them by pretending to love them. Thankfully, your



Representative image used.

support helps Melissa and her team to lay the bases for the prevention of kidnapping and other harassment, which is even more common.

Unfortunately, no matter how prepared these girls are, they're never safe. Maggie was already part of a girls' ministry group when they kidnapped her. It was this group that helped her recover after her traumatic experience.

"They really stood by my side... They helped me restore hope and to let go of my fear and the deep sense of shame," Maggie says. *"My self-esteem, sense of value and life were restored. I'm so blessed to have Nora* [her group leader] and my girls' group. I praise God for them."*

Thank you for supporting this ongoing ministry in Egypt, which is vital in empowering Christian girls and women, and subsequently, the Church in Egypt.

*Names changed for security purposes.

GIVE A GIFT, GIVE HOPE

2020-2021

Daily, persecuted Christians around the world experience various atrocities for their faith in Jesus Christ. They're harassed, rejected, isolated and even killed.

Despite the cost, they continue to serve Christ, but sometimes it takes its toll on them as they experience great anguish and hopelessness.

What can you do?

You can help give them hope and ease their pain by providing them with the vital support they need, including empowerment training for vulnerable girls and women, safe houses for those in danger and so much more.

Stand with your persecuted family and prayerfully consider how you can best support them through a *Gift of Hope*.

Visit www.OpenDoors.org.za/goh to see how you can bless a persecuted Christian today.



Thank you for continuing to pray

As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, Pierre Meute*, a team leader for our work in Central Africa, gives us a glimpse into the reality Christians are facing during this time.

“Hello dear friends in the faith

We continue to trust God because we [find] our faith in Him. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has not swept away all the other challenges. And especially, it hasn't reduced persecution over the world.

In our sub-region, the large-scale discrimination and marginalisation of Christians continue. And you know that this pandemic comes with restricted access to resources. So, you can imagine... it exposes our persecuted brothers and sisters to even more marginalisation.

It's very difficult to be confined (indoors) when we don't have access to basic needs... when we don't know how we can feed ourselves.... So, this situation is difficult for everybody. But during difficult times, persecuted Christians face even more difficulties because they are sidelined.

Thank you for continuing to pray for these beloved ones, so that they'll not forget that God watches over them during these difficult times. As you pray faithfully and fervently for them, we also encourage you not to lose hope or courage and to keep your commitment to the Lord. We also pray for you, because it's not easy for you either.

A big thank you for your support in prayer and gifts of generosity. As we express our gratitude, we call on you to support us more in prayer for Christians in Central Africa.”

Pierre Meute

*Name changed for security purposes.

FROM JAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Dear partner of the persecuted Church

They're locked up, left alone by their families, spat on by their neighbours, rejected by their communities and thrown into prison by the authorities. Yet our persecuted family in Christ continues to stand strong and let their light shine.

Now with the added pressure of the pandemic, you may be wondering how is our persecuted family doing?

I recently had the opportunity to speak to some of our main local church partners in South and Southeast Asia. One of them shared with me how they're reaching more people with the message of salvation during the lockdown, because Open Doors helped them to do their sermons digitally.

As I spoke to our church partners, they all told me to thank those who are helping them in this time of need. They also assured me of their prayers for us. We, at Open Doors, also thank you for your continued prayers and support.

I urge you to stay diligent in your prayers and support for our persecuted family. One of the ways you can support them, is through a *Gift of Hope* from our new *Gift of Hope* catalogue. Your gift will remind them that they're not alone and will help them to continue to be Christ's witnesses in some of the most dangerous places for Christians. Please prayerfully consider how you can make a difference in their lives through a gift.

In this time, we continue to keep you and your loved ones in our prayers, as we've all been deeply affected by the current pandemic. May God continue to bless you and keep you during this time.

Together in His service



Jan Gouws
Executive Director
Open Doors Southern Africa



Visit www.OpenDoors.org.za/goh to view our new *Gifts of Hope* catalogue!

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