

# **OpenDoors NEWSLETTER**

Open Doors Southern Africa – 50 years of service to the persecuted Church

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**Propaganda,  
persecution,  
pandemic.**

Help the Church  
in India survive

Representative image used.

**#StandforTruthIndia**

**July / August 2021**

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# This may be the last time to speak up



As our partners in India work tirelessly to strengthen our family in Christ, one of our partners, Pastor Samuel\*, gives some insight as to why more than ever before, we need to speak up for our family in Christ.

## Persecution and propaganda increasing

Although a democratic country, India is ruled by the Hindu majority system that adheres to an ideology called Hindutva, which promotes the idea that to be Indian is to be Hindu.

*"In 2014, one of their leaders [promoters of Hindutva] said that the end of 2021 would be the last day of Christianity in this country. Since then, year by year the persecution against Christians has been increasing, and in the recent past we've seen hundreds and thousands of people being affected by persecution."*

*"They falsely accuse (Christians) of converting Hindus to Christianity by giving them money. They say Christian organisations and mission organisations are misusing foreign funds to convert Hindus to Christianity. This kind of propaganda has created a negative narrative against the Christians in the country."*

## We need to speak up

Not even the pandemic has stopped the extremists from executing their plan to see India free of Christians.

\*Name changed and identity hidden for security reasons.

***"It's been worse. [Extremists] are still working on their plans to wipe out the Church by 31 December 2021."***

*"We have to do this... The situation over here gets so bad, that this may be the last time we're able to speak up for our country."*

## Your prayers and support make a difference

*"Thank you for all your prayers and support and care for our people... When I see what you guys are doing and helping and supporting the ministry it reminded me of Proverbs 31:8. It speaks of those who cannot speak for themselves... This country has become the country where the people, they don't have [a] voice. We can't say anything, we can't protest, we can't speak... With your support and your care for those people, [it] helps us to hold back those who are led away to death... When you speak for those who cannot speak that makes a difference...."*

Please hear the Church in India's urgent cry! We must act now to expose the lies – and to support and protect the Church from being destroyed. For more information, visit

[www.standfortruthindia.co.za](http://www.standfortruthindia.co.za)

# You helped keep our sisters alive

Preetha\* and her family from India came to faith in Christ a few years ago after God healed her daughter, Mirai\*, from a skin disease while Vinita\* (mid 20s) came to faith through a friend from a previous job.

One day, Preetha and her husband, Pastor Navin\* were visiting Vinita to pray with her. After they prayed, they were having tea, when suddenly a group of drunk men barged through the door.

The leader of the group grabbed Navin by the shirt and said: *"We don't want your foreign religion here!"*

The other men attacked them, smashing everything in sight and beating them while one grabbed Vinita's baby and threw her on the ground. Somehow, everyone survived the brutal attack. Perhaps most amazingly of all, Vinita's baby escaped with just a few scratches on her legs. Unfortunately, Vinita and the others were more seriously hurt.

*"My head was injured, and I have deep injuries near my hip and on my shoulders. My sister sustained serious head injuries. My pastor's daughter was also hurt on her hands and legs. They hit our pastor's wife,"* said Vinita.

Preetha was hit unconscious after she lifted her hand to protect her head from being hit with a metal rod. Her hand was almost cut in half. She also had a broken leg and other internal injuries.

Sadly, their ordeal continued at the hospital, where they were denied treatment because of their faith.

Thankfully, through your prayers and support, Open Doors local partners were able to respond immediately and take Preetha to another hospital and pay for her treatment. Preetha says: *"Had Open Doors partners not helped us, I would've died."*

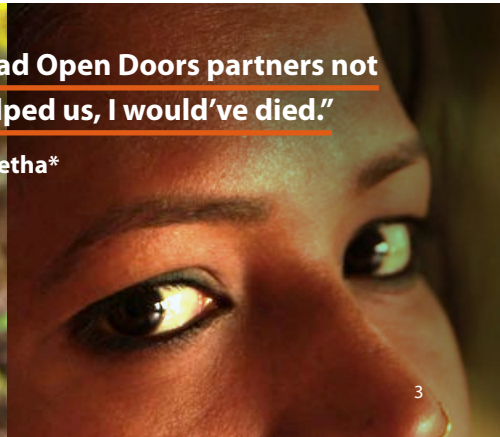
Sadly, this isn't an isolated incident – hundreds of believers were physically attacked because of their faith last year. But through it all, your prayers and support are enabling Open Doors local partners to provide vital practical and spiritual support to these believers, helping them to survive, but also showing them that they're not forgotten by their global church family, or by God.

\*Names changed and identity hidden for security reasons.



**"Had Open Doors partners not helped us, I would've died."**

Preetha\*





# Resilient amid the darkness

In a country that's home to over one billion people, it's hard to imagine how anyone could feel alone. And yet, that's exactly how many of our brothers and sisters in India feel. Thankfully amid the persecution, oppression and isolation they're not forgotten. And because of this, they're resilient in serving Christ amid the darkness...



## The Darkness...

### Forced to perform a Hindu ritual

*"We were sad in our hearts. We just let the Hindus do what they wanted and got married through a Hindu ritual. Inside we knew we belonged to Jesus. We lived with my in-laws and secretly followed Him."*

**Mohan\***, who was forced to marry his wife according to Hindu customs.

### Threatened

*"We refused to give up our faith, which made them very angry. They became aggressive because we were so persistent in following Jesus... When they threw us out of the village, they threatened to rape or kill me if I returned."*

**Bahia\***, who was beaten and kicked out of her village for refusing to deny Jesus.

### No place to hide

*"There's no hiding place. People will notice when you remove the idols from your house and garden, don't visit the temples, and don't participate in Hindu rituals. They will blame you for angering the gods of the village. They feel they must take action."*

**Pastor Samuel\***, an Open Doors partner, who helps Christians in India.

We have produced a beautiful e-book of India, showcasing amazing pictures and testimonies. As a thank you for any donation of a R100 or more towards the Impact India campaign, you will receive a free e-book.

[www.opendoors.org.za/india-photobook](http://www.opendoors.org.za/india-photobook)



Scan to make a donation and receive your e-book.

## The Resilience...

### Peace amid persecution

*"The people who are against me, I have forgiven them, and after forgiving them I feel peace in my heart."*

Mohan after choosing to forgive those who persecuted him, his wife and parents for their faith.

### Desire to share the Gospel

*"I want to spend more time learning about God, so that one day I can return with the Gospel... It's my deep desire to share God's Word. I want to tell everyone that Jesus didn't just die for foreigners. He died for everyone. That's my message to the people in my village, to the people in India and to people outside of our country."*

Bahia, after going to Bible School to strengthen her faith so she can return and share the Gospel with those who persecuted her.

### We're pro-Jesus

*"God is not absent; He is at work. He is in control. He is supreme. The Lord is our strength, but our Father in heaven works through others. He has laid it on our hearts to connect with Christians around the world, and to work together to make a difference. We are not anti-Hindu. We are pro-Jesus and we want to display His all-encompassing love to India."*

**Pastor Samuel on Christians in India, whose heart is to show the love of Jesus.**



# The legacy of talking to Jesus



I recently listened to a song that reminded me of how I learned about Jesus when I was young.

Like most children in South Africa, it's quite normal to grow up in a Christian household where going to church, singing in the choir, and going to youth camps is the norm. Our parents taught us how to bless the food, how to pray and how to talk to Jesus. Until it came to a point where we were old enough and either decided to continue to serve God or felt that we wanted to figure life out for ourselves.

I was one of the youngins that chose the latter, but in many instances where life was hard, I found myself going back to what I was taught when I was younger. I started to talk to Jesus more and more every day. I've never looked back since.

Thinking back, I'm so thankful for the Biblical foundation that my parents laid and how they taught me about Jesus. It's heartbreaking to think that some families won't get to experience that with their children or instil those values freely without backlash, persecution or death.

There are places in this world that don't allow children to be taught Christian values and don't want families to live out their faith – India is on that list. The Body of Christ in India is under attack and the future generation could live a life where they don't know anything about Jesus, and the beautiful inheritance that is freely passed down to us. And as part of the Body, it's our responsibility and it should be our heart's desire for the next generation all over the world.

So, what can you do to help? You can join us in prayer and support our worldwide initiative on 15 August.

**Your voice can make a difference in their lives. So, speak up so that families in India can pass down the legacy of Christ to their children and their children's children. Visit [www.standfortruthindia.co.za](http://www.standfortruthindia.co.za) for more information on the initiative and to add your voice.**





# Encourage our family through a letter

Our brothers and sisters in India continue to face increasing hostility from Hindu nationalists who want to turn India into a Hindu nation, leaving no room for Christians.

They're harassed and beaten while their children are bullied. Sometimes their homes are destroyed, or they're thrown out of their villages. They may be denied access to water, education or government rations, because of their faith. When it's this difficult to be a Christian, you need encouragement.

Please take a moment and write a letter of encouragement to our Christian brothers and sisters in India. Please address your message to: 'Dear sister' or 'Dear brother' or 'Dear brothers and sisters'. That way, we can send messages of encouragement to many different Christians, e.g. a father, a mother, a pastor, a student etc. These messages will be shared at events or meetings where persecuted Christians come together.

## Send us your letters:

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**Letter Writing: India**  
c/o Open Doors SA  
PO Box 1771, Cresta, 2118



**Email**  
[letterwriting@opendoors.org.za](mailto:letterwriting@opendoors.org.za)

# Meet Open Doors Southern Africa's NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR!

Dear friends, grace to you

Goeiedag, Sanibonani, it's nice to meet you! My name is Lynette Leibach. I'm excited to join you, our partners, and the team in the Open Doors family, in serving and strengthening our Christian brothers and sisters facing persecution and oppression across the world.

My interest in connecting people's desire to help and opportunities to give and act was sparked as a child, seeing my parents' habit of responding to the needs of others presented to them in appeal letters, alongside their regular tithing.

I grew up in Egoli, Mzantsi, in an Afrikaans family. I studied at UJ, with a focus on organisational development, business management and marketing, and, later on, did a qualification in Christian Studies.

A church ministry trip to the old Yugoslavia as a young adult, to come alongside the local church, operating in the aftermath of a devastating war, shaped a change in my vocational focus.

I've been blessed in following Jesus into different vocational and life adventures. I've been working in various sectors in for-purpose organisations since 2003 and commercial settings before then, mainly in South Africa, the East and Southern Africa region, and for the last four years in New Zealand as an executive member of a Christian international development organisation.

With Jan's retirement after decades of faithful serving, I'm humbled to join Open Doors Southern Africa as executive director in our jubilee year – celebrating 50 years of purposeful dedication and support to strengthen the persecuted Church.

I look forward to connecting with you, our support and prayer partners, and church communities, as together we continue to impact our Christian family on the frontlines.

Peace

**Lynette Leibach**

Executive Director Elect  
Open Doors Southern Africa



Persecuted  But never alone.



Open Doors South Africa


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