



# OpenDoors NEWSLETTER

Same faith. Different lives.

**Persecuted but not abandoned.**

See how you strengthen isolated Christians in the most dangerous country to follow Jesus.

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ISSUE 1

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# AFGHANISTAN

## Strong faith remains – thanks to your help

It's been shocking to watch the speed of deterioration in Afghanistan last year, and it's difficult to understand just how vulnerable the Church has become in such short a time.

Open Doors' mission here has always been covert. But we can tell you that your generous and reliable support enabled our partners to respond immediately to the crisis.

The situation is volatile, borders and camps remain closed. The Church is small and scattered. Many are in hiding. But thanks to *you*, we're continuing to do all we can to support vulnerable secret believers. Believers like Zabi\*.

Zabi shares our faith, but her life looks very different from ours. Being a believer in Afghanistan, she has lost loved ones because of her family's faith. As a young, well-

educated woman, active in human rights, she is a target for persecution. And unlike us in South Africa, her family must keep their faith secret.

Sadly, the Taliban know Zabi's secret, so her life is in danger...

**"I may have to go into hiding, or be deported to Afghanistan. I may be killed if that happens."**

*"My family are secret believers," she says. "A few years ago, the Taliban came, and they took my father away because he was a Christian. They tortured him for months, and then they killed him. A few months later, my brother also disappeared. We never heard of him again."*

When the Taliban took over in August

2021, some Christians were able to escape Afghanistan along with the international forces. Other Christians like Zabi had to run to the border.

Now, Zabi is living in another country. But the danger isn't over for her. She says: *"Our situation is desperate. I have money in my bank account but cannot access it from here. I have a visa, but it will expire soon."*

*"What will happen to me? I don't know. I'm praying I can leave this country and go somewhere safe. I may have to go into hiding. Or I'll be deported to Afghanistan. I may be killed if that happens."*

### Strong faith remains

Thankfully, God led our frontline partners to Zabi and thanks to your help, we've been able to give her food, pay her rent and give her money to stay safe and survive.

Our partners have prayed with her and encouraged her to stay strong in her faith. Thanks to your support, we can continue to help her – though we don't know what the future may hold.

**"You are a strand of hope to me. There's a chance I may live."**

Your support means everything to persecuted believers like Zabi: *"Thank God for your food and clothes deliveries, your financial support and your prayers and encouragement. You are a strand of hope to me. There's a chance I may live."*

Thank you for your continued prayers and support. We remain dedicated to scale up our support as the need and opportunity arise.

\*Illustrative images used, and name changed for security reasons



Afghanistan was no. 2 on the World Watch List before the Taliban took over in August 2021.

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### We have moved to a quarterly newsletter.

This is part of our goal to be good stewards of what is entrusted to us. Rest assured your newsletter will still bring you the latest stories from the field. To receive more frequent testimonies, news and prayer requests via email, SMS your name & email to 43699.

# From the heart



Dear partners and friends

With the release of the 2022 World Watch List, we see that circumstances have worsened in some countries, whilst others remain at the same high or extreme level of persecution. It's important to note the realised threats in countries like Afghanistan, Cuba, China and Myanmar. The cost of following Jesus is very high for our family of faith living there.

As we read about the hardship of the men, women and children who are under constant threat because of their faith in Jesus amidst our own realities of a lingering pandemic and the resulting economic and social pressure, it's easy to become overwhelmed and lose heart.

But we are admonished by Paul to not lose heart – not about the state of persecution and not about our own circumstances. *“Therefore we **do not lose heart**... for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is*

*seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”*

How can we fix our eyes on the unseen and eternal in the context of our persecuted family of faith?

We can become aware of, pray for, visit, give a voice to, and give of our own time, energy and resources to strengthen these families, men, women and children – each one has a face and name. God does not stand afar off from them – neither should we. Let's continue to hold them up as Kingdom-bearers in these places.

I'm looking forward to serving with you in 2022!

Peace

**Lynette Leibach**

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Persecuted  But never alone.

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REG # 2004/023397/08 | Printing done by Resolution Litho