



OpenDoors NEWSLETTER

STAND AS ONE FOR OUR FAMILY IN AFRICA



ISSUE 2

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THE CHURCH IN AFRICA
NEEDS YOU MORE
THAN EVER

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The Church in Africa

Young but resilient



Africa has one of the youngest churches in the world, but it's a Church with many enemies that experiences persecution in violent ways. One of these enemies is extremist groups that constantly target believers. Despite this, believers continue to follow the Lord, even at the risk of their own lives.

This is true for believers like Gertrude* (27) from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a widow and the sole parent to her and her sister's children after her sister and husband were killed.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) killed her sister in May 2018 and her husband on their farmland in August 2021. They also took Gertrude's 3-year-old son. She sustained injuries during the attack after being shot thrice, twice in her foot and once in her stomach.

"Going up the hill, I got another bullet in the stomach. This is where I lost my strength; I fell to the ground. I could see them take my boy and behead my husband from where I was. When I saw them behead him, I told myself we were all dead. I lost the remaining strength I had," she says.

Even before her husband's death, life was not easy, but at least they had each other. Now life has become even more complicated for Gertrude. But despite it all, Gertrude holds fast to God. She recalls: ***"If I went far away from God, I would already be dead, and the danger from which God saved me, I have hope that God is present. We all are sojourners on this earth. It is God alone who gives me the strength to be able to bear this pain."***

Believers in Africa are remarkably resilient, like Gertrude. They are incredibly courageous and defiantly committed to spreading the Good News of Jesus in their corner of the world. But they are also very vulnerable. That is why they need *you* – their global Church family to unite in prayer and action. Join us as we embark on a multi-year campaign to partner with believers in Africa. Without our joint action, the very presence of the Church in Africa is in jeopardy.

Join us as we call the Church in Africa to arise!



with our expert on freedom of religion and belief

We asked Ilia Djadi, senior analyst for freedom of religion and belief in sub-Saharan Africa, a few questions about the situation in the region. He explains about how things have changed in the region, who is behind the attacks and how we're helping.

What did the context look like for Christians before?

All countries in sub-Saharan Africa used to be great tourist destinations. But this is no longer possible because in recent years, about 10 years or so, we have seen a drastic deterioration of the security situation in the region and religious freedom is dramatically undermined.

What happened to change things?

A deterioration of security. For example, Burkina Faso has a long culture of tolerance.



But this has changed. We have seen Christian minorities become a target. Nigeria is another reminder. For 12 years now, northeastern Nigeria is affected by Islamist insurgency.

Who is behind the attacks on Christians?

Well, there is an upsurge of religious extremism in sub-Saharan Africa. Radical preaching and teaching have been leading to hostility towards religious minorities such as Christians. The way people are behaving towards Christians has changed.

We can see there is no single part of the continent right now, which is spared by this Islamist insurgency. The phenomenon is now expanding and gaining territories.

How is Open Doors helping?

Open Doors (OD) is active through its local partner organisations – providing relief materials, trauma care and training. OD also does advocacy. We are trying to raise awareness about this situation, which is often ignored by the Western world and media.



THE CHURCH IN AFRICA NEEDS YOU TO RISE

Violent persecution is a large-scale and growing problem in sub-Saharan Africa.

Join us this May as we embark on a multi-year campaign to partner with the Church in sub-Saharan Africa to arise.

PRAY AS ONE
GIVE AS ONE
RAISE AWARENESS AS ONE
STAND UP AS ONE CHURCH TO VIOLENT PERSECUTION IN AFRICA

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you.”

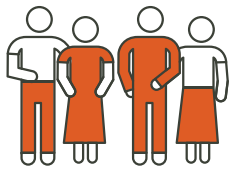
ISAIAH 60:1-2



www.opendoors.org.za/ariseafrica

PERSECUTION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

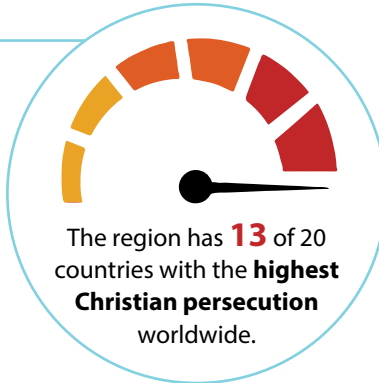
Africa is home to some of the world's most persecuted Christians. In sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) alone, violence against Christians is at an all-time high, with our family of faith feeling abandoned.



> 1,2 billion
Total SSA population

20 years is the **median age**, with 62% of the population under 25.

SSA has **16** of the top 20 **child marriage** countries.



8%

Increase in the Open Doors WWL **violence score** for all 26 SSA countries, with half in the "extremely high" range.

20% of Christians in Africa live in situations of at least "high" levels of persecution or discrimination for their faith, putting the **presence of the Church in SSA in jeopardy**.



- **5 170** Christians **killed** (4 650 in Nigeria alone)
- **2 714** Christians **abducted** (2 510 in Nigeria alone)
- **1 500** Christians **sexually violated**
- **1 212** Christian owned/ utilised **properties destroyed**

Reporting period: October 2021-September 2022. Confirmed cases only, figures are likely much higher. Each case likely represents several more.



Violence ranking for the region (WWL 2023)

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| 1 Nigeria | 6 DRC |
| 2 Cameroon | 7 Tanzania |
| 3 Burkina Faso | 8 Mali |
| 4 CAR | 9 Niger |
| 5 Mozambique | 10 Sudan |

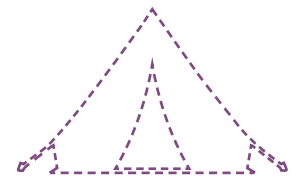
Where Islamic militants use violence to silence the Church

- Sahel, Burkina Faso
- Middle Belt, Nigeria
- Lake Chad Basin, Chad
- Northeast, CAR
- North Kivu, DRC
- Northeast and coast, Kenya
- All areas, Somalia
- Northeast, Mozambique



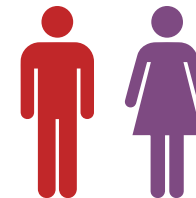
3/4 of the **terrorist groups** responsible for the **most deaths** worldwide in 2021 operate in SSA.

- **Islamic State (IS)**
- **Al-Shabaab**
- **Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM)**



15 551 800 people **displaced** by conflict and violence by the end of 2021.

SSA is the most **deadly-violent** region for Christian men.



The region has **12** of the 20 countries where being female impacts persecution.

76% of the region has **forced conscription and military service**.



More than **89%** of global **Christian killings** are in SSA.



Without our joint action, targeted violence will continue to go unchecked.

So join us in **praying for the Church** in SSA. Sign up to pray with us in May at www.opendoors.org.za/ariseafrica or scan the QR code.



FROM THE HEART



Dear partners and friends

With the likelihood of a tough winter seeming more likely due to, among other things, power rationing for 8 hours a day, it's a reality that life is hard. The effects of living in a fallen world clearly show that we desperately need saving.

This need can't be met through positive psychology or our efforts or even avoidable through escapism. And the answer doesn't take away our suffering. A personal relationship with the Way, the Truth, the Life – Jesus – is the answer to your, my and the world's problems.

But how would we know Him, grow in our relationship and be part of the Body without hearing, discipleship and other believers? Parts of our continent are being desolated of its Christian witness by violence and extremism. Who will speak, secure and bring hope for believers in these countries so they can bear witness for Christ?

This is when I hear the challenge of Matthew 6: *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

As Africans, you and I have the opportunity to store up **treasures in heaven** as we launch a multi-year campaign to pray, give, raise awareness and speak out for our family of faith in Africa, and see what the Lord will do in Africa and among the Body of Christ on our continent. Join me in standing as one against violence in Africa.

Peace

Lynette

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Persecuted  But never alone.