SOWING SEEDS OF HOPE
FOR THE HIDDEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE
SERVING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE
www.opendoorsca.org
Dear Partner,

Our 2020 World Watch List, released in January, carries vital information which will assist you as you pray for our persecuted family members. (Find out more on page 8). The research from last year reveals that 260 million Christians in the top 50 countries, experienced at least high levels of persecution. That’s one in eight Christians worldwide.

Christian women and their children continue to be especially vulnerable to alarming oppression and abuse. In far too many cases, they suffer the loss of parents, husbands, children, income and even their homes. In Nigeria alone, surges in Islamic militancy have brought unspeakable suffering to thousands of women and children in recent days. Yet through these times of crisis, we hear their stories of faith.

After a brutal attack on her village, sister Rikiya, as a widow, faced social rejection and was left impoverished. Yet, despite these incredible circumstances, Rikiya’s faith has never been stronger. She says, “All of this has made me closer to God than I have ever been before.” Through your prayer and support, sisters in Christ, like Rikiya, are given hope, healing and a chance for a better future.

As I hear these testimonies of courageous faith, I am reminded again of how much I need these family members to teach me what it means to persevere in times of trouble. My prayer is that as you read their stories, you too, will be challenged to live a life of bold faith.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg
Executive Director

Cover image: A widow from Nigeria. Open Doors provides loans for widows in Nigeria who have experienced extreme persecution so that they can start a business and become self-sufficient.
Rikiya survived a brutal attack on her village. But as a widow, she then faced social exclusion, as well as poverty. Women like Rikiya are doubly vulnerable to persecution, targeted for their gender and their faith. But your support through the church is sowing seeds of hope, healing and new life.

“Houses are being set on fire in the neighbouring village!” shouted Rikiya’s neighbour, bursting into her home. She ran outside. Smoke filled the air as flames consumed the next village. She didn’t have much time. Her village would be next.

Boko Haram soldiers were coming to attack.

Rikiya knew the danger that militant Boko Haram extremists presented to her Christian community in northern Nigeria. She knew that as a woman, she could be singled out for violence. In village raids like these, soldiers had been abducting girls, raping women, destroying livelihoods and burning homes.

“I was so traumatized; my husband is gone, and Boko Haram had captured our village. We had nothing except the clothes on our body.”

Only one month before the attack, Rikiya’s husband had taken ill and suddenly died. She was still grieving, wondering how she would manage to provide for her family alone.

“I WAS SO TRAUMATIZED.”

“When I came back, it was not easy for me. I was a widow with three children. It was not easy,” she says. Rikiya pauses through the pain, pinching her eyes to hold back the tears.

By late night, Rikiya and her children made it to the next town and found shelter. They stayed away for two months before it was safe to return. But by this time, she had lost it all.

All she could do was pick through the rubble. She found a few larger pieces of burnt corrugated metal and made a small shelter.

Shortly after, Open Doors workers visited the grieving community and began the long journey of restoration for Rikiya and her neighbours.

“You came to rescue me,” she says. “First, with your trauma healing. I discovered my trauma was like a wound that needed to heal. The scar would always be there, but the wound would get better.”

“HOPE AND HEALING”

Thanks to your support, Open Doors was able to help Rikiya overcome the trauma she had suffered, rebuild her life and make a living. Because of people like you, Open Doors was able to provide a microloan to help Rikiya purchase two female goats. Each goat produces two kids every season. Every time Rikiya has a need, she sells one of the goats. Sometimes it’s for her children’s school fees; other times for food, crops or clothing.

“You are the [ones] who brought...
“God has been my father, my husband, my everything. All of this has made me closer to God than I have ever been before,” says Rikiya.

hope and healing back to me,” she says. “Since then, God has been my father, my husband, my everything. All of this has made me closer to God than I have ever been before. Honestly, if not for the loan I received to raise these goats, I don’t know what I would have done.”

DOUBLY VULNERABLE

Today, Christian women like Rikiya are doubly vulnerable: targeted for their gender and their faith. They are singled out for violence, then face social exclusion, leading to trauma and poverty.

In Jesus’ day, women had low social status, as in many parts of the world today. But Jesus treated women differently, seeing beyond the judgments of his society and affording them dignity and honour. When Jesus rose from the dead, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene. John 20:18 tells us:

“Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news, ‘I have seen the Lord.’”

“I am healed, and I always tell people you healed me.”

I SEE YOU

Persecuted women are often hidden, their suffering invisible. Just as Mary Magdalene saw the Lord that first Easter, so the Lord sees the suffering of women who are persecuted today. Jesus sees pain and replaces it with love: at Easter, and every day. This Easter, as we celebrate his resurrection, we have the opportunity to ‘see’ our sisters who are suffering, and to sow seeds of hope in their lives.

Rikiya has begun the long road to recovery – and many like her face this same hard journey. With your support and prayers, they won’t have to make that journey alone, without hope.

Her name means ‘Exalted by the Lord.’ God is using the support and prayers of her worldwide family to make that promise a reality.

“I am healed [from my trauma], and I always tell people you healed me,” Rikiya says. “Thank you.”

Will you strengthen, restore and give courage to women like Rikiya who are doubly vulnerable to persecution?

WRITE A LETTER TO RIKIYA

This is a special opportunity for you to encourage our sister with a letter! See page 13 for more details.

DONATE TODAY

Give to sow seeds of hope, bringing practical help and spiritual and emotional healing.

Every $22 could provide a widow with a loan to buy seeds for crops and other farming equipment so that she can become self-sufficient.

Every $104 could provide a year’s food and housing for a widow and child, and education for her child.

Every $388 could provide urgent trauma care and longterm spiritual healing for a woman who has suffered violent persecution.

Please act today: use the response form, phone (905) 636-0944 or visit www.opendoorsca.org
MORE THAN 260 MILLION CHRISTIANS EXPERIENCE HIGH LEVELS OF PERSECUTION FOR THEIR FAITH IN JESUS.

APPROXIMATELY 1 IN EVERY 8 CHRISTIANS AROUND THE WORLD IS PERSECUTED BECAUSE OF THEIR FAITH

EVERY DAY, an average of eight Christians are killed for their faith and 23 Christians are raped or sexually harassed for faith-related reasons. 

EVERY WEEK, an average of 182 churches or Christian buildings are attacked, and 276 Christian homes burned or destroyed.

EVERY MONTH, an average of 309 Christians are unjustly imprisoned for their faith.

Each year, Open Doors publishes the World Watch List, an indexed ranking of the top 50 countries where it’s most dangerous to be a Christian. This guidebook is the perfect tool to help you pray for our persecuted family. Each country has a list of prayer points and gives you more insight into the pressure Christians face for following Jesus specific to that country.

Order your complete guide by contacting our office.

ORDER YOUR FREE COPY OF THE 2020 WORLD WATCH LIST

WWW.OPENDOORSCA.ORG/FREE-WWL-GUIDE
Or call (905) 636-0944

ORDER YOUR FREE COPY OF THE 2020 WORLD WATCH LIST

WWW.OPENDOORSCA.ORG/FREE-WWL-GUIDE
Or call (905) 636-0944
Why a wounded Sri Lankan Christian is singing songs of hope

When the bombs exploded in Sri Lanka last Easter, Debbie (age 6) lost her sight. She lost both her parents. But thanks to her faith in Jesus, she hasn’t lost hope.

The Easter Sunday 2019 bombings in Sri Lanka targeted Christians across three hotels and three churches. The suicide bombers claimed 350 lives, including Debbie’s parents, and injured thousands more. The attack came out of the blue, yet there had been signs of increasing extremist activity in Sri Lanka. Open Doors has reported on the rise of extremist attacks in Asia and the threat to Christians and other minority groups.

In the first months after the attack, Debbie couldn’t walk. She relied on others to carry her around. Open Doors were on the ground immediately, visiting families like Debbie’s to pray with them, support and encourage them in any way they could.

Now, Debbie is back on her feet and dancing. She uses her regained movement to express her love and thanks to the Lord.

EYES ON HEAVEN

“(Debbie) is the joy in our life,” say her older sisters. “Whenever we cry, Debbie says, ‘Don’t cry. Our loved ones are in Heaven.’”

Debbie’s aunt, 24-year-old Rebekah, was with her in church when the bomb exploded. When asked what she remembers of that day, Rebekah says, “Not much. I was in the bookshop, and the suicide bomber stood right outside when he detonated the bomb in his backpack. All I remember is fire. Fire everywhere.”

Rebekah carries the memory of fire in her mind and on her skin. All of her left side is covered in third degree burns. Part of her right side is burned too. The top of her head is missing a large chunk of hair, revealing her bald and scarred scalp.

TESTIMONY OF HOPE

Yet the strength of her faith is evident.

“I want to testify about what happened to us and to testify of who Jesus is,” she says.

Rebekah’s story is certainly a testimony of the power of God’s love to overcome terrible persecution and tragedy. Both Rebekah and Debbie have kept their hope alive through the support and prayers of their surviving family, their church, and their wider Christian family around the world through Open Doors.

Thanks to your prayers and support, families affected by the Zion Church bombing in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, are being encouraged. You’re enabling our team to be there to help Rebekah and Debbie’s family in any way they need.

Please pray for courageous Christians as they continue to navigate this “new normal” in their lives. Pray for physical and emotional healing for both Rebekah and Debbie, as well as their siblings and other family members. Pray for provision and for godly people who will comfort, encourage and empower them to, in Rebekah’s words, “testify of who Jesus is”. 
You Can Bring Encouragement in Times of Despair

Halida* is a believer from a Muslim background in Central Asia. She came to faith after seeking healing from God, and He changed her life. Now she is a leader of a small home group for women. She shares the Gospel with Muslim people in a country where being a Christian from a Muslim background is extremely dangerous. But she says, “God saved and changed my life with His love. Now I want to share it with other people.”

Halida faced much persecution when her family members found out about her new faith. She was verbally abused by her mother and beaten by relatives and was asked to leave the family home. By the grace of God, she received support from other believers during this difficult time. It was after much prayer and intercession that Halida’s family accepted her back, and she could go back home.

Now Halida is involved in a ministry for suffering women – she is a leader in a secret home group and works with women. As the level of persecution for believers in Central Asian countries continues to rise, there is a real need for building up and empowering Christians to stand strong so that they can continue to be salt and light.

You have a chance to join us on a trip this year as we travel to encourage our brothers and sisters around the globe. Join us in July as we travel to Central Asia or in November as we travel to Vietnam. For more details of these trips, please contact us by:

- phone: (905) 636-0944
- email: travel@odcan.org

To learn more, contact us: travel@odcan.org | (905) 636-0944

Encourage Rikiya through Letter Writing

Rikiya’s life has been full of difficulties and loss, but through it all, God has stayed near to her. God has used your prayers and support to show Rikiya that her name indeed does mean “exalted by the Lord.” Please write a letter of encouragement to Rikiya, send it to us and we will forward it on to her.

Writing Guidelines:
- Greeting cards, children’s artwork, and postcards are best.
- Write in simple English and keep your letter brief.
- You may include a Bible verse.
- Do not mention Open Doors in your letters.
- You may provide your first name and country, but do not provide your full address.

Please mail your letter to:
Open Doors Canada
8-19 Brownridge Rd.
Halton Hills, ON L7G 0C6

Encourage Through Travel

Turkmenistan: July 2020
Vietnam: November 2020

www.opendoorsca.org
Ouk* is a believer from southern Laos. He was exposed to the realities of living as a Christian in Laos at a very young age. “I didn’t see my father until I was seven. He was in jail because he shared the gospel in our province,” he shares.

“I really wanted to be a gangster to avenge my father, but when I was about eight or nine, God changed my heart and mind. I have seen the power of worship and praising God.”

Ouk’s dream is to be a worship leader. “I want to share what I have learned here from the training with others. Thank you for supporting this training.”

*name changed for security reasons

Christians in Nigeria are calling on the worldwide church to join them in prayer for their country after a prominent Nigerian Pastor, Rev. Lawan Andimi, was kidnapped and executed by Boko Haram in January.

Please pray for Rev. Lawan’s wife and children at this very difficult time. Pray also for renewed urgency for the Nigerian government to protect its citizens from attacks.

Reema’s family came to faith when God healed her of a heart condition. But they have faced rejection from their Buddhist community as a result. She explains, “We became Christians, but that was followed by a complete social boycott by our community and our relatives. In our community, that matters a lot, as the families and communities are interdependent in many ways. The expulsion made us feel isolated.”

When Reema felt God calling her to study theology it seemed impossible. Her mother was struggling to make enough to care for Reema and her three siblings, but your support and prayers have enabled Open Doors local partners to support Reema’s studies.

Reema says, “I really want to thank God and you for helping me pursue theological studies. This was a great answer to my prayers.”

YOU ARE HELPING OUK FULFILL HIS DREAM

YOU HELPED REEMA FULFILL GOD’S CALL ON HER LIFE

DON’T CRY, DON’T WORRY, BUT THANK GOD FOR EVERYTHING.” Rev. Andimi’s message shortly before being executed.

Your prayers and support recently made it possible for Ouk to receive musical training through Open Doors local partners.

YOU ARE HELPING OUK FULFILL HIS DREAM

YOU HELPED REEMA FULFILL GOD’S CALL ON HER LIFE

CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA ARE CRYING OUT FOR YOUR PRAYERS

NIGHT WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Come hear how millions of Christians are surviving under high levels of persecution and what you can do to make a difference!

Tuesday, March 10 @ 7pm
Woodvale Pentecostal Church
205 Greenbank Road, Ottawa, ON

Wednesday, March 25 @ 7pm
Glad Tidings Church
2460 Mountain Road, Moncton, NB

Thursday, March 26 @ 7pm
Journey Wesleyan Church
131 Duncan Lane, Fredericton, NB

Sunday, May 3 @ 6pm
Connection Church
38 Pleasant Street, Truro, NS

REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE FREE EVENTS AT:
WWW.PERSECUTEDCHURCH.CA

Would your church like to host this event? Contact us!
“I was traumatized: my husband had gone, and Boko Haram had captured our village. We had nothing except the clothes on our body.”

As a Christian, Rikiya was targeted by extremists. As a widow, she faced social exclusion. As a mother, she needed to provide for her children.

“Before you, I had no hope,” says Rikiya. “You came to rescue me. My trauma was like a wound that needed to heal. The scar would always be there, but the wound would get better. Thank you.”

Now, Rikiya is on the road to recovery, but she still needs ongoing support.

So do the thousands of women like her, whose persecution remains unseen.

Your Easter gift and prayers sow seeds of hope for women, like Rikiya, who are persecuted for their faith and gender.

Every $22 could provide a widow with a loan to buy seeds and equipment so that she can become self-sufficient.

Every $104 could provide a year’s food and housing for a widow and child, and education for her child.

Please act today: use the response form, phone (905) 636-0944 or visit www.opendoorsca.org.