

Impossible faith?

It seems impossible that North Koreans could ever hear about Jesus. Yet, Open Doors fieldworkers like Cho* are meeting North Korean refugees, sharing the gospel, providing safe houses and food – and seeing the impossible happen. Will you support their ministry today?

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Every £25 could provide safe housing, food and spiritual aid to someone who has fled extreme persecution.

Visit opendoorsuk.org to make your gift today or phone 01993 460015. Thank you.



*Name changed for security reasons
Re-enactment image



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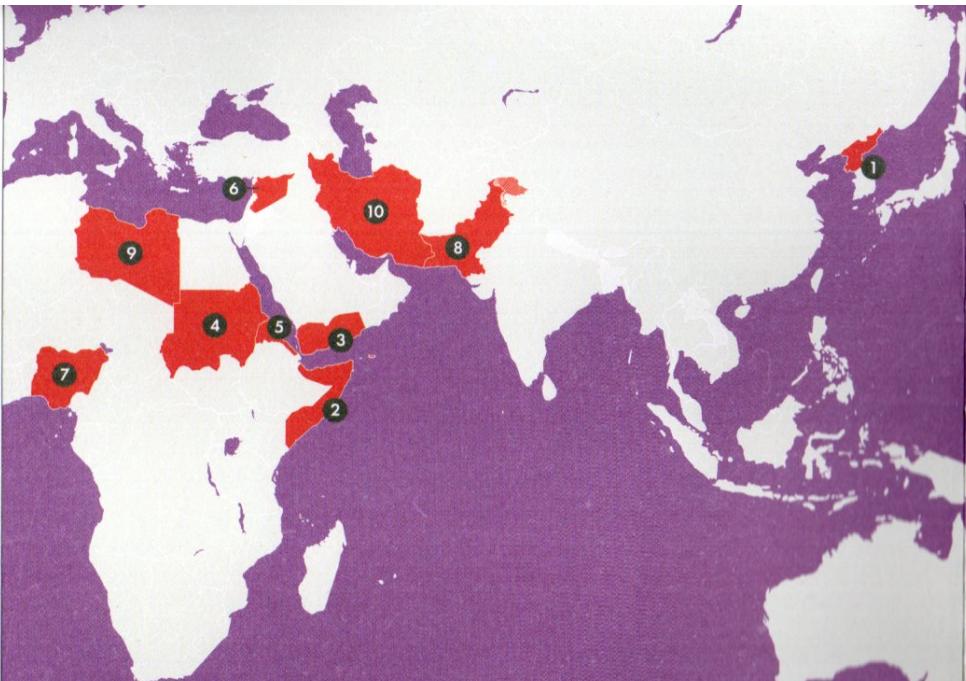
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OpenDoors

**WORLD
WATCH
LIST 2026**



**10 IMPOSSIBLE STORIES FROM
THE PERSECUTED CHURCH**



THE TOP 10 WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

1	NORTH KOREA	5	ERITREA	9	LIBYA
2	SOMALIA	6	SYRIA	10	IRAN
3	YEMEN	7	NIGERIA		
4	SUDAN	8	PAKISTAN		

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

MATTHEW 19:26

IMPOSSIBLE FAITH

Violent extremists. Dictatorial authorities. Hostile relatives. They all have one aim: to make being a Christian impossible.

How do they do it? They make it clear that choosing to follow Jesus might cost your family, your job, your freedom and even your life. You might be attacked at any moment. You might endure decades of mounting pressures. You will be a target, an outcast or maybe even a martyr.

But is it working? Absolutely not. In all 10 countries featured in your *Open Doors World Watch List Top 10*, and in dozens more, your persecuted brothers and sisters wake up each morning reaffirming their faith. They know it should be impossible. But they know and love the God of the impossible.

Each year, Open Doors uses extensive research, interviews and detailed information to rank the countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. As you read about courageous believers from the 10 hardest places to follow Jesus, please join with them in unstoppable, defiant prayer. Hear the testimonies of faith that should be impossible and know that in your prayers, you – like them – are part of God's impossible plan.

*All asterisked names changed for security reasons

EUN-YEONG

1 NORTH KOREA

Eun-Yeong* thought that escaping from North Korea was the most dangerous thing she'd ever do.

Like many North Koreans, she and her husband Cheol-Ho* fled across the border in search of food and work in order to survive. They knew that, if caught, they'd be sent back and interrogated, imprisoned and even killed.

Not long after they arrived in the mountain forests of China, Eun-Yeong heard somebody approaching through the undergrowth. She was terrified – could it be a spy?

"Get away from us!" she shouted at the man she saw. "Leave us alone!"

"I'm not here to hurt you," he whispered. "I want to help you. Please, don't shout – we don't know who is listening."

Eun-Yeong didn't trust the stranger – but then he opened his bag and showed that it held food, water and blankets. Eun-Yeong and her husband were desperately hungry, thirsty and cold. They decided to take a chance.

A few days later, the man returned. He introduced himself as Cho* and explained that he explored the forests to find North Korean escapees, like them, to help.

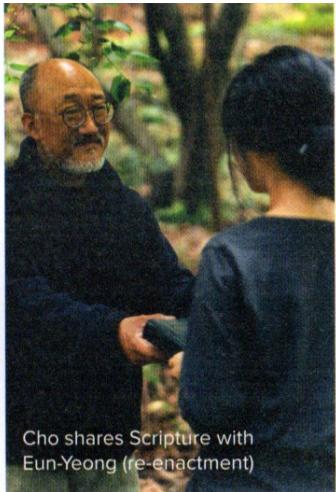
**"PLEASE, DON'T SHOUT
– WE DON'T KNOW WHO
IS LISTENING."**

"You do this each week," Eun-Yeong said. "Why do you do this?"

"It's because of a man named Jesus," he replied. "He's the Son of God and He loves you very much." Cho pulled something else out of his bag and offered it to her.



Eun-Yeong and Cheol-Ho receive a Bible from Cho (re-enactment)



Cho shares Scripture with Eun-Yeong (re-enactment)

He continued: "In fact, I brought you a book that's all about Him."

Eun-Yeong was instantly on her guard. Back home, she'd been warned about Christians. In school, North Korean children are told that Christian missionaries want to kidnap them. "I don't believe in God," she said. "We're grateful for the food, but we don't want anything to do with suspicion."

"The book is yours to keep," said Cho. "Read it or don't read it – it's up to you."

Despite their reservations, Eun-Yeong and Cheol-Ho looked through the book. They found the stories of Jesus interesting, even if they didn't understand or believe them. But then everything

changed. One night, Eun-Yeong had an extraordinary dream. In it, a man beckoned to her by name: "Eun-Yeong! Eun-Yeong!"

She didn't know exactly why, but she knew who the man in the dream was. It was Jesus.

When Cho came back, she rushed to tell him. "I don't know what this means, or why Jesus would call my name," she said, "but I know I want to find out more about Him. What can you tell me?"

"OUR FAMILY HAS GROWN TO FIVE."

Cho began to explain about Jesus's life, death and resurrection. About His love for them. About His offer of salvation. All of Eun-Yeong's scepticism began to melt away. She and her husband asked question after question.

"You know," said Cho, when eventually he had to leave, "if you really want to know all about Jesus, I can take you somewhere where there are more people from North Korea – people with the same questions as you."

When Cho came the next night, they had packed their shelter and belongings and were ready to go with him. "I was praying you would say that," said Cho, smiling.

The couple went with Cho to a safe house supported by Open Doors, where they learned more about Jesus. Before long, both of them decided to give their life to Him!

After they'd been at the safe house for a while, Eun-Yeong heard something unexpected from God. He was calling her to go back to North Korea, to tell other North Koreans about the miracle of the gospel! Eun-Yeong knew it meant leaving relative safety for a possible death sentence. But she also knew that she wanted to say 'yes' to God.

Eun-Yeong was nervous to share what she'd heard with her husband – but discovered that he had felt the same calling that she had! Together, they courageously crossed the border back home, to continue their role in God's impossible plan for North Koreans.

Eun-Yeong had thought that escaping from North Korea was the most dangerous thing she would

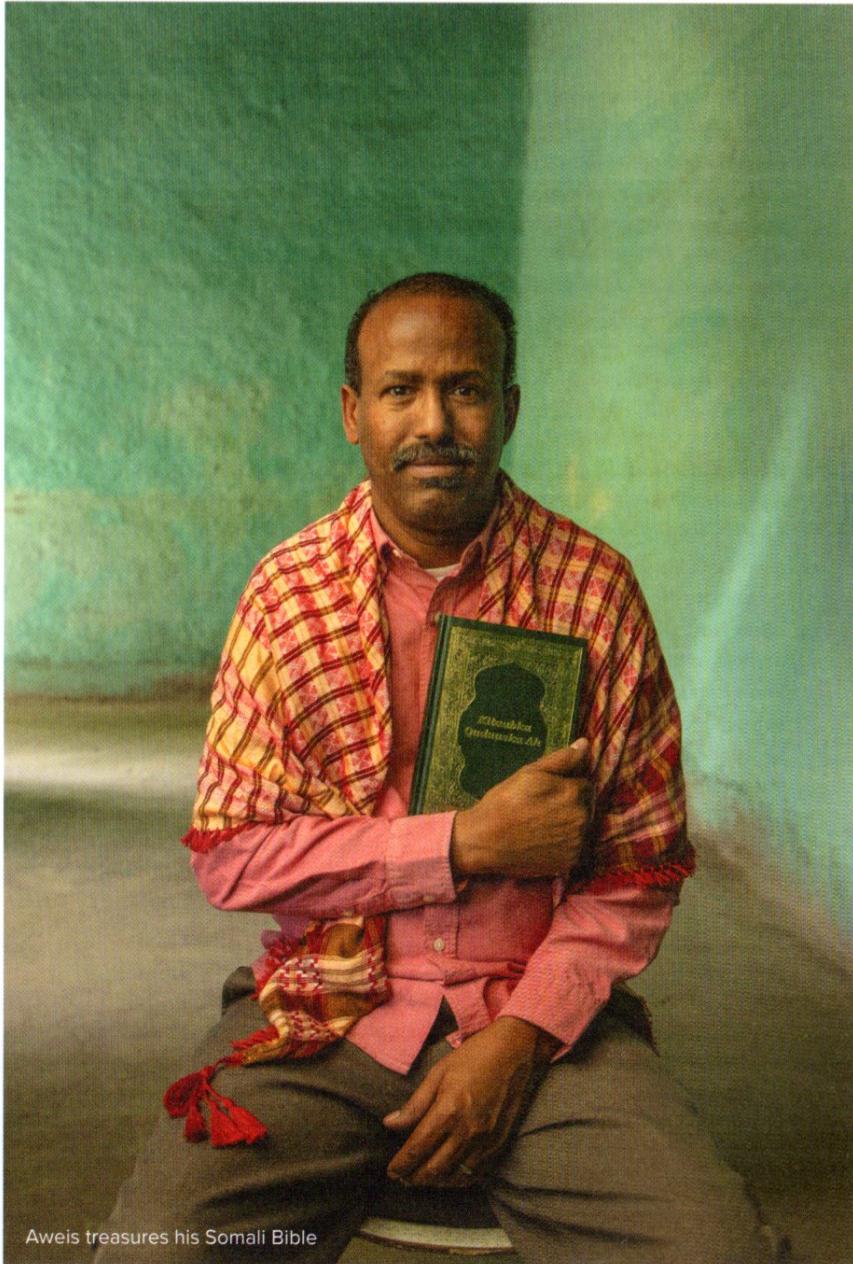
ever do. It turned out that returning was even more dangerous.

A year later, Eun-Yeong and Cheol-Ho were able to smuggle a message across the border to Cho, the man who had forever changed their lives. It simply said: "Our family has grown to five." Little by little, their ministry is transforming lives in North Korea.

It seems impossible that North Koreans would hear the gospel. But God is using Open Doors fieldworkers like Cho, and brave men and women like Cheol-Ho and Eun-Yeong, to do the impossible.

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Heavenly Father, thank You that nothing is impossible for You. I pray for more North Koreans to hear the gospel and turn to You – and that You would embolden, strengthen and encourage North Korean believers as they face enormous risks to follow You. Thank you for the courage of Eun-Yeong, Cheol-Ho and Open Doors secret fieldworkers. In corners and whispers, I pray for Your church to gather – and that, one day, Your name would be boldly proclaimed and worshipped throughout North Korea. Amen.



Aweis treasures his Somali Bible

AWEIS

2 SOMALIA

"Somali Christians are among the most extremely persecuted in the world," says Aweis. "You could be sitting in a cafeteria, enjoying your meal and somebody could come and attempt to cut your head off. In Somalia, it seems impossible to become a Christian – the persecution is so intense."

Everyone in Somalia is expected to be a Muslim, but Aweis's family are particularly devout. His father is a Muslim cleric, and he had intended Aweis to become one too. But even as a teenager, Aweis knew that wouldn't happen. "I was never happy with Islam," he says. "The more I studied it, the more questions I had."

One day, Aweis stumbled across a Christian ministry on the radio. He listened more and more. "It was just a matter of intellectual curiosity," he remembers. "I had

no plan to convert." After a while, he wrote to the radio ministry and asked for a Bible – this was many years ago, when the postal system still functioned in Somalia.

"When I received my materials, and I read them, I liked the message of Jesus," says Aweis. He even showed them to his dad, not realising how drastic his response would be. His dad told him: "If you become a Christian, I will be the one to kill you."

"IF YOU BECOME A CHRISTIAN, I WILL BE THE ONE TO KILL YOU."

Aweis kept his explorations quiet – but, three years later, he decided to follow Jesus. His family and his clan cut him off completely. "I was an outcast," he says. "Someone who had defiled the family name. The enmity and the threats I faced

were way more than I expected. But the more I was threatened, the closer I got to Jesus."

For seven years, Aweis didn't know a single other Christian. One day, he risked asking a woman he thought might be a fellow believer.

"THE MORE I WAS THREATENED, THE CLOSER I GOT TO JESUS."

"I need fellowship; do you happen to know any Somali Christians?" he asked. She told him to wait, and left him alone for 20 minutes. He later learned that she had spent this time praying for discernment to know if he were really a Christian. Reassured by God, she eventually returned with a believer called Liban. Aweis finally had community.

"To be able to have fellowship with another believer was a joy," Aweis says. "I felt peace. What was once seen as impossible became possible, because God was in it. Now I had somebody I could sit down with to learn the Bible, read together and minister with them."

Little by little, their small community grew – and that's when the persecution intensified.

"Liban was the first to be killed," remembers Aweis soberly. "He was reporting to work when he was shot and killed by radical Islamists. Within a short time, another person was killed."

At the same time, God was speaking to different members, telling them that the group wouldn't be totally eliminated. "He said, 'Some of you will remain. You will become stronger.' It made us bolder. We prayed longer and we prayed better."

After two years, only Aweis and one other believer were left. Everyone else had been martyred for following Jesus.

Aweis eventually decided to leave the country – but his ministry was far from over. Today, he supports Somali believers in the Horn of Africa. "When I see how the Holy Spirit is leading this small church, it gives me special joy," he says.

Outside the country, it isn't quite as dangerous – but the church is still totally underground, and there remains the imminent danger of death. "When someone comes to the Lord, that's the first time we prepare them for

persecution. We tell them how to act wisely, to be wise as a serpent and as innocent as a dove."

Aweis knows how risky his ministry is. "I receive constant threats," he says. "Emails, WhatsApp messages, social pages about me threatening my life. We know the risk, but if you have a calling, you count the cost and you proceed."

He adds: "But do not feel bad for us. Rejoice with us because we're seen worthy to be persecuted as Christ was persecuted. Do not pray that persecution disappears and goes away, because then what's left will not be real Christianity."

"THERE IS NO PLACE WHERE CHRIST CANNOT BE FOLLOWED."

"Instead, pray for us to be stronger spiritually, that we thrive in the midst of persecution, that we become more Christ-like. So, when Islamist persecutors see us, they think: 'Wow, they are so different, we want to be like them.'"

He concludes: "There is no place where Christ cannot be followed. It's impossible. The Holy Spirit can penetrate every wall."



BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Join Aweis in praying: *"Heavenly Father, when You are with us, no one can be against us. Because when we have You, Heavenly Father, everything we want to do in the Kingdom of God is possible. No persecution, rejection or threat could remove the light from the people of Somalia. You told us that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church. Heavenly Father, people may see it as impossible to have a thriving Somali church, but You know it's not impossible because You gave us your Holy Spirit who's our guide, comfort and counsellor. In Your name we pray, Amen."*

KHALED

3 YEMEN



Growing up, Khaled* knew what he'd do if he ever met a Yemeni non-Muslim. "I would automatically attack them," he said. "I had an extremist mentality towards anyone that isn't a Muslim."

It never happened – because everyone in Yemen is a Muslim. Or so Khaled thought, until he was scrolling the internet one day. "I was surprised by a video where a person was openly saying that

he was a Christian from Yemen. In my mind, he was an infidel."

But he couldn't stop thinking about the man whose video he'd seen. Eventually, Khaled messaged him. The reply he got was filled with enthusiasm and kindness. "I was talking to someone who followed up with me, answered my questions and helped me understand," says Khaled.

Eventually, he accepted Christ and decided to get baptised! "It was an online baptism, due to security restraints," recalls Khaled. "After that I wanted more – my thirst grew; I wanted to study the Word and get closer and deeper in my relationship with God."

But when his family found out about his new faith, they were scared and angry. "It was a disgrace for my father and the family that I had left the teaching of Islam," says Khaled. He was thrown out of the house. "My parents now view me as an infidel and a blasphemer. It's as if I am no longer their son."

Khaled's Christian community is a lifeline: "The small group of disciple-makers were like my

backbone in those tough, tough days. We prayed a lot together and they encouraged me. I had bruises on my back, on my arms, on my sides and on my face. Yet, I grew closer to my Father and Friend in heaven." He continues to be discipled by Open Doors partners outside of Yemen.

Khaled now shares the gospel online with other Yemenis. "God is opening doors and many people want to learn more about Jesus," he says. "I don't want to leave – I want to start a local church. I want to baptise Yemeni Christians here. If people leave, who will tell them that Jesus saved them? It isn't easy, but it is necessary. With God, we can do anything."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Lord God, raise up more believers in Yemen, I pray. Bless the online ministry of courageous Christians like Khaled, and place unstoppable curiosity in the hearts and minds of those who encounter these videos and posts. Help Yemeni Christians develop and grow in their faith and show them the love of a powerful and gentle Father. Amen.



RAFAT

4 SUDAN

Everyone in Sudan is affected by the ongoing civil war – but the Christian minority are vulnerable on multiple fronts. The conflict is driven by violence between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), which have ruled Sudan since a military coup in 2021, and a splinter group called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

"Christians are especially vulnerable," explains Rafat Samir*, the chairman of the Evangelical Community Council for Sudan. "In displacement camps they are not safer – because of their faith, they won't receive help. There is no food."

This church in Khartoum, Sudan, was demolished by the authorities

Some believers can't leave El Fasher, a city in south west Sudan caught up in the conflict. "You need resources to leave, and many Christians do not have savings," says Rafat. "Even if you flee from the area and reach the army area, you will be categorised as an RSF supporter by the armed forces."

In El Fasher, three churches have been bombed. "The church is always bombed by both warring parties," says Rafat. "They don't bomb the military area – but the church is always bombed."

The future of the church looks uncertain. If Christians have fled to try to find safety, the government might confiscate their church buildings. Even outside of the civil war, believers are targets for Islamist extremists.

"The issue is that most of these places are controlled by fundamentalist Muslims, especially in Khartoum and Omdurman," explains Rafat. "In the middle of this chaos, they can do anything against the church and call it an accident. They can do anything to anyone under the blanket of war." These vulnerabilities come on top of the constant persecution and

discrimination faced by Sudanese Christians – particularly those who have converted from Islam. Families and communities see this conversion as a shameful betrayal, and so some new believers keep their faith secret even from their own loved ones.

"We don't know what this new Sudan will look like after the war," says Rafat, "but I think this is a time for the church to stand up for our rights to ensure we have a place and a voice."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Rafat asks: *"Pray for Christians to receive emotional and spiritual healing from what they have seen in the war. People are extremely traumatised, and this impacts our witness. Pray for the youth and the women who have experienced painful things, not only because of the war but because they are Christians. Pray for communities to be reconciled. The church can play a role by being a light and salt in the community, and to start the healing of reconciliation in our country between the many cultures and races we have here."*

MY PRAYERS

Use this space to write your own prayers for Christians from the top ten countries in this booklet. What 'impossible' prayer can you pray? How do you want to see your brothers' and sisters' lives transformed?

Eun-Yeong and other North Korean Christians

Aweis and other Somali Christians

Khaled and other Yemeni Christians

Rafat and other Sudanese Christians

Hiwot and other Eritrean Christians

Juliette and other Syrian Christians

Abraham and other Nigerian Christians

Anwar and other Pakistani Christians

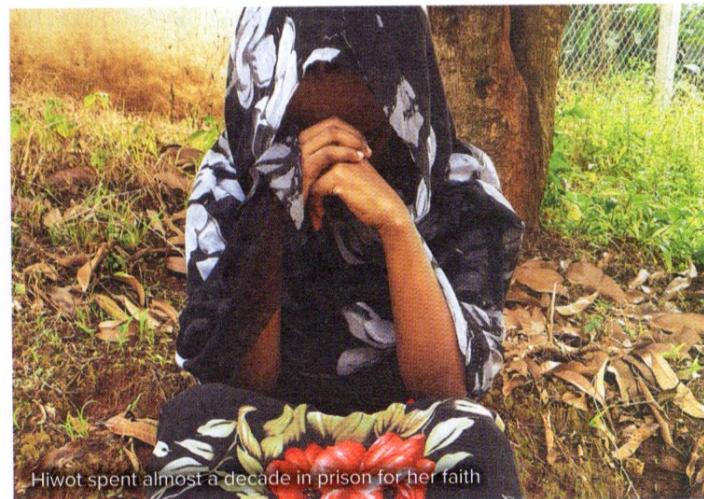
Libyan Christians

Shima and other Iranian Christians

**"WHEN SOMEONE PRAYS FOR ME, THEY'RE LIKE
MY PARTNERS IN THIS JOB; I AM NOT ALONE. I
BELIEVE THAT THE ONE WHO PRAYS FOR ME HAS
THE SAME VISION AS ME."** – SANG*, A PERSECUTED BELIEVER

HIWOT

5 ERITREA



Hiwot spent almost a decade in prison for her faith

Hiwot* grew up in the Eritrean Orthodox Church. All Christians in Eritrea face intense scrutiny from the authorities, but converts from the Orthodox Church, Catholic and Lutheran Churches

and converts from Islam face the worst persecution from family and community.

When Hiwot first met Evangelical Christians, she was struck by how

differently they behaved. Despite punishment from her parents, she often sneaked out to join their meetings. "There was a lot of love among each other," she says. "I understood what the Bible said about God being love." Secretly, she committed her life to Jesus.

"I SPENT NEARLY TEN YEARS IN PRISON."

One day, Hiwot and her small church were worshipping – and the neighbours told the police. "When they arrived, they took us all to prison," she says. "I spent nearly ten years in prison."

Government authorities regularly conduct house raids like this, and have arrested hundreds of 'unsanctioned' Christians, particularly church leaders. There are currently around a thousand Eritrean Christians held in prison, most of whom haven't been formally charged with any crime.

The authorities intended prison as a deterrent – but Hiwot found deep, prayerful community with the other other imprisoned believers. Someone managed to sneak a Bible into the prison in a

food container. "Because a single Bible wasn't enough for all of us, we divided it among many," says Hiwot. "We had to hide it inside our clothes once we finished reading."

The prison officers told Hiwot and her friends they'd be freed if they denied their new faith – but they refused. "When we told them that our faith is in our hearts and we have the right to believe, they beat us," she says. "We had little hope of leaving the prison alive; they had martyred other believers."

Eventually, to her surprise, Hiwot was released. Many others remain in prison. She continues to worship God, knowing the risks.

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Hiwot asks: "My request is that you pray for our country's religious freedom and for an end to persecution. To freely worship God, just like other nations, and to free the prisoners. To put an end to persecution and hardship, and to spread the gospel. For myself, what I desire is to be blessed abundantly and to be a reason for others to accept the Lord."



Threatening graffiti on a Syrian church wall

JULIETTE

6 SYRIA

When the authoritarian Assad regime was toppled in a coup in December 2024, it wasn't clear what that would mean for the Christian population. Despite some promising signs, Open Doors' World Watch List research shows that violence and pressure have spiked and Christian communities are exposed to targeted violence, discrimination and social marginalisation.

This was clearest of all in June 2025, when Saint Elias Church in Damascus was bombed. At least 22 people were killed and more than

60 injured. Juliette* is a Christian living in Syria. She shares her perspective on the attack: "The news of the attack spread quickly. I felt scared, and my eyes filled with tears. I felt helpless and started to imagine what we would do if this happened in our church.

"PRAY THAT ALL SYRIANS WILL SOON LIVE IN PEACE"

"People from all over Damascus rushed to help. Hospitals were filled with casualties. The next day, the streets filled with demonstrators chanting, 'How beautiful is death on the wood of the cross!' Christians in Syria have always held steadfast to their belief, and this ordeal truly highlighted their solidarity.

"The following day, every governorate in Syria organised prayers for the martyrs. I joined the prayer, as we all had nothing left but prayer. You could see the sorrow in the eyes of the worshippers, and tears that expressed a grief mixed with fear and questions about the future.

"This bombing wasn't merely at a Damascus church; it was a

blow to the heart of every Syrian Christian who witnessed the brutal martyrdom of their brethren." In the months since the attack, Christian communities have faced further threats.

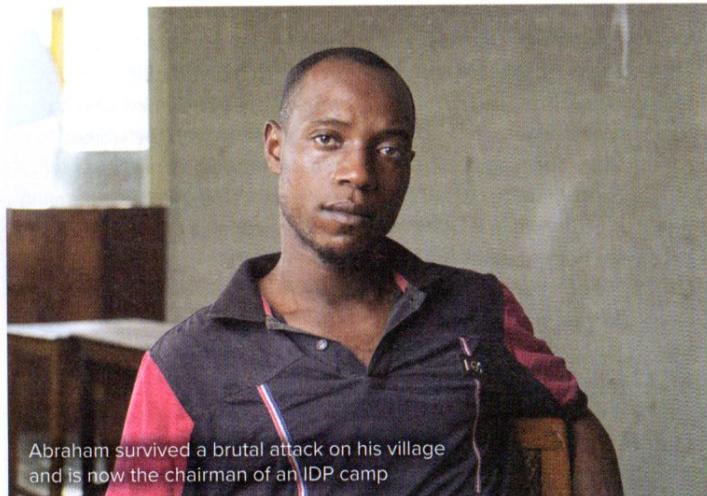
In November 2025, threatening messages were graffitied [PICTURED] at two other local churches. "Christian infidel, there is no deity but God, after St Elias Dweila, it's St Elias Maared's turn," read the message at St Elias Church in Maared Saidnaya. A week earlier, St Cyrillos Church was graffitied with the words: "There will be no polytheists left in Syria by God's will. Our meeting is near, you pigs of the cross."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Juliette asks: *"All of us pray for peace and healing in Syria; we pray for comfort for those who suffer. Lord, please strengthen the faithful, and guide all of us towards a future of hope. We remember those who have sacrificed, asking for Your protection and everlasting peace. Pray that all Syrians will soon live in peace and that God's hand will always protect them, and that they find their way to build their country again in peace."*

ABRAHAM

7 NIGERIA



Abraham survived a brutal attack on his village and is now the chairman of an IDP camp

Abraham was warned about the attack on his community.

Days before the Islamist militants descended on his Christian-majority village, Tse Ancha in

Benue State, central Nigeria, they sent a threat to 'claim your peace'.

Around midnight, they heard gunshots. "We did not have any form of defence," remembers

Abraham. "The first people who fled their homes were shot and killed. They attached their flashlights to their guns. Once they pointed it at you and identified you as a human being, they immediately shot you."

"IF THE LIGHT FOUND YOU, THEY SHOT YOU."

Why were these believers targeted? Abraham is clear about the attackers' motives: "Their agenda is to Islamise us. That is the main reason we are being killed. Until we accept their agenda, they swear to kill every last one of us."

According to Open Doors research, each year more Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in the rest of the world combined. The militants seldom face any consequences or justice.

The attack continued into the middle of the night. Eight people were killed, seven more were injured – and the whole community had to flee. Across sub-Saharan Africa, millions of Christians have been displaced by violence and conflict. Abraham is the chairman of one of Nigeria's many displacement camps, where

he lives alongside thousands of uprooted Christians.

"Life in the camp is very difficult," he says. "We don't have any work to do. I have been struggling to remain alive. We value our farms because that is where we get our means of livelihood and pay our children's school fees. Being in this camp, we have been greatly limited. We aren't able to farm."

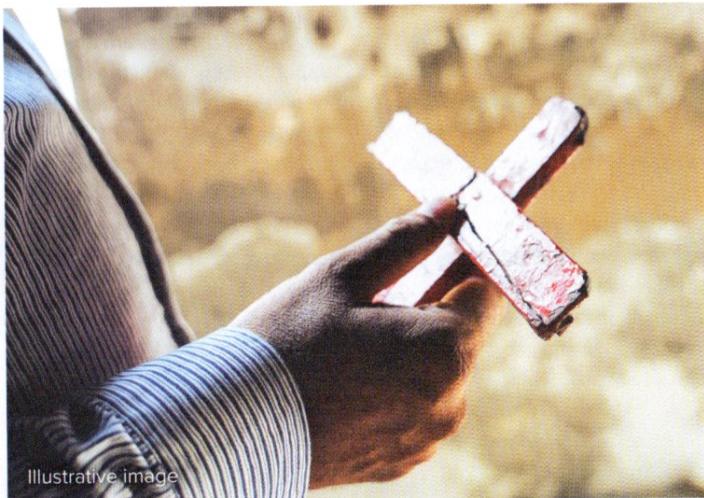
Open Doors partners are able to support Abraham and the other believers in the camp, thanks to Open Doors supporters. "The food items being given to us show us that Christians all over the world care about us and remember us. That makes us very happy. This gladdens my heart."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Abraham asks: *"Brothers and sisters, I appeal to you all that you help us by praying for us and these attacks. Our major problem right now is for God to touch the minds of our killers and also reduce our sufferings. We have been passing through a lot. We would love to return to our homes. I'm seeing that we are not safe where we are. Please pray for us."*

ANWAR

8 PAKISTAN



Illustrative image

Anwar Kenneth spent 23 years on death row in Pakistan. His crime? Sending letters about religion to Muslims. "My brother was a Bible scholar and often engaged in scholastic discussions

with his Muslim friends and religious leaders," Reshma Bibi, Anwar's sister, told the media. "He communicated his religious ideas through letter writing, but was never disrespectful."

Anwar's defence counsel, Rana Abdul Hameed, agreed: "In his open letter, Anwar Kenneth merely stated that his Christian belief does not endorse Islam. He hasn't used any derogatory language for prophet Muhammad that warranted a conviction under blasphemy." His letter was nevertheless used to arrest Anwar and charge him under Section 295-C of Pakistan's blasphemy law – which carries a mandatory death sentence.

The blasphemy laws are wielded as weapons of persecution to oppress Pakistan's Christian minority. While they only comprise 1.8% of the population, about a quarter of all blasphemy allegations are made against Christians. Hundreds of cases are recorded each year, though the supposed 'crimes' are seldom properly investigated.

In practice, the death penalty is almost never carried out – but even being accused of blasphemy is extremely dangerous. The targets of these accusations often face 'mob justice', with Islamist extremists attacking and even killing them. In 2024, a 73-year-old Pakistani Christian, Lazar, was beaten to death after being falsely

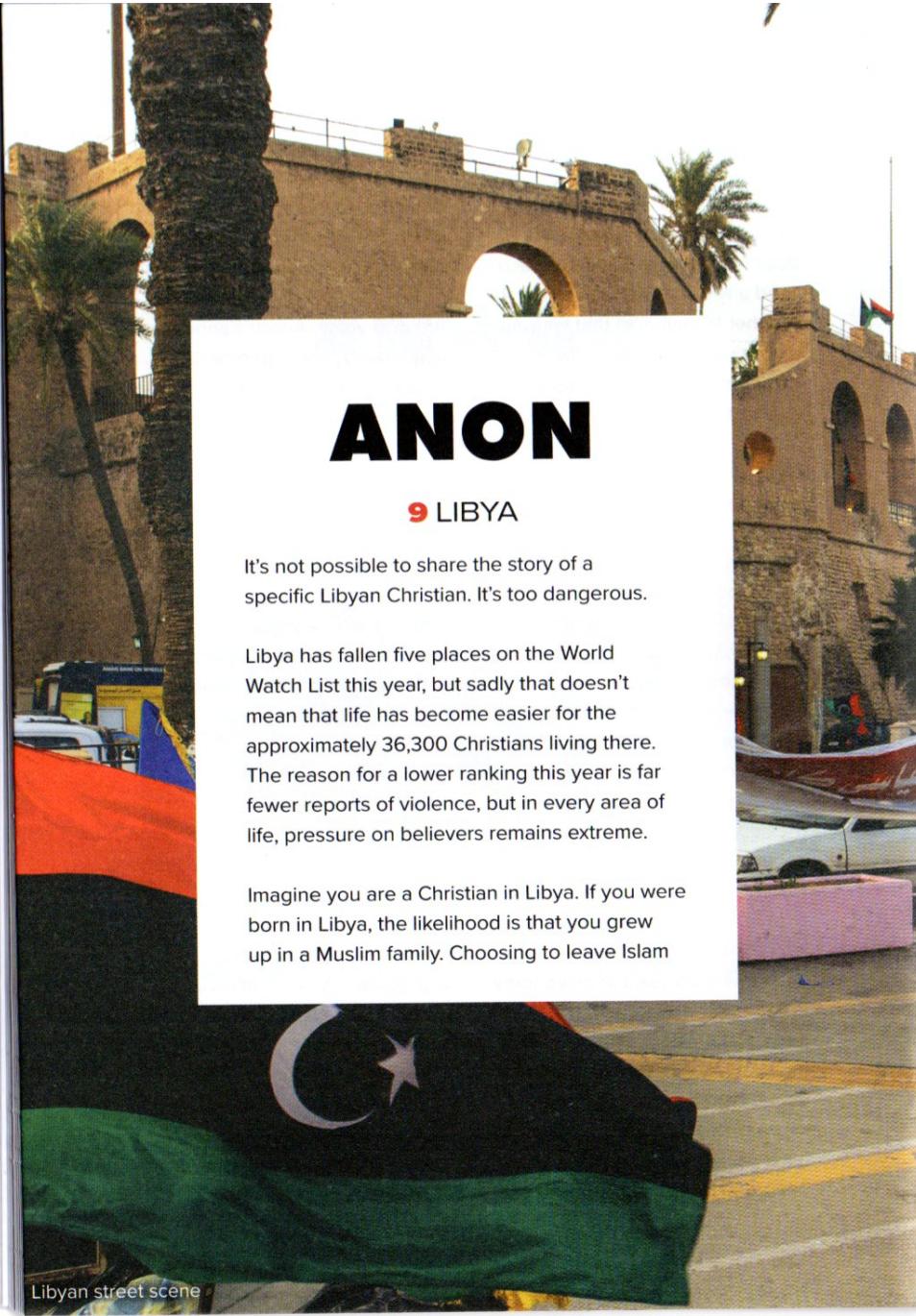
accused of burning the Quran. The year before, rumours of a damaged Quran led to thousands of Muslim extremists attacking churches and homes in Jaranwala.

After 23 years, Anwar Kenneth was acquitted by the Supreme Court. It was a glorious answer to prayer – and had seemed impossible for decades. He was 72 years old. The adjudication has met with strong opposition from Islamic legal groups, who demand strict enforcement of the blasphemy law.

Hameed told reporters: "Anwar Kenneth's acquittal is a big setback to them; it will have an impact on all blasphemy cases of similar nature."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Lord God, thank You for the release of Anwar Kenneth and for his family's resilience and diligence in prayer for him. Please bring about the release of other men and women being held on death row under the blasphemy law, and protect all who face accusations from mob violence. May Your Word and truth find a home in people's hearts in Pakistan. Amen.



ANON

9 LIBYA

It's not possible to share the story of a specific Libyan Christian. It's too dangerous.

Libya has fallen five places on the World Watch List this year, but sadly that doesn't mean that life has become easier for the approximately 36,300 Christians living there. The reason for a lower ranking this year is far fewer reports of violence, but in every area of life, pressure on believers remains extreme.

Imagine you are a Christian in Libya. If you were born in Libya, the likelihood is that you grew up in a Muslim family. Choosing to leave Islam

exposes you to extreme pressure from your parents, your siblings, your wider family and community.

At the more 'fortunate' end of the scale, you could lose your job, your home and access to your children. At its worst – and particularly if you are a woman – you might be murdered by your family because of your faith. The penal code reduces sentences for so-called 'honour' crimes, so there is a tacit acceptance of this form of persecution.

Outside of your family, Islamist extremists target Christians for kidnap and even murder. Migrant workers are most vulnerable to these attacks – and political instability in the country means extremist groups operate with few consequences.

The Libyan authorities will also target you, as leaving Islam is a criminal offence. In April 2025, ten Libyan Christians and a Pakistani Christian – all converts from Islam – were given prison sentences of between three and fifteen years for 'insulting religious sanctuaries and rituals online', 'calling for the creation of a banned group' and 'encouraging changes to

the fundamental principles of the Constitution'. In short, for following Jesus. International commentators have lamented their unfair trial.

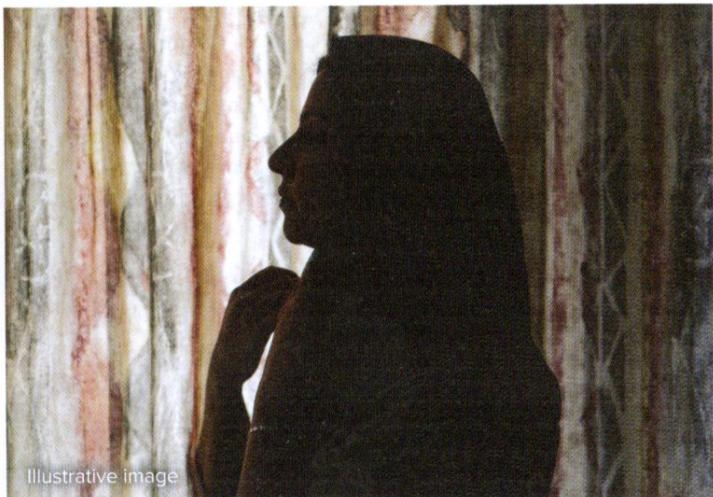
It seems impossible to be a Christian under these circumstances. And yet there are around a thousand more believers in Libya than there were last year – and that's just the conversions that haven't taken place in total secrecy. More and more people in Libya are encountering Jesus and deciding that following Him isn't just possible: it's the best decision they could ever make. It brings danger, but it also brings the joy and triumph of knowing the Saviour.

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Sovereign God, I lift up my Libyan brothers and sisters. I don't know their names, but they are my family. Please encourage and sustain them as they follow You. May their impossible peace that passes all understanding make family members curious to hear the gospel. Please also protect migrant Christians in Libya and thwart the plans of Islamist extremist groups. Build Your church in Libya, I pray. Amen.

SHIMA

10 IRAN



Illustrative image

In an interrogation room in an Iranian police station, Shima* was handed a blank piece of paper. "If you write here that you regret becoming a Christian, that you want to return to

Islam, then we can help you," the police officer told her.

"That's not a confession, that's a forced lie," she told the officers. "I won't write down

something I don't believe. I don't regret Christ. I never will."

Shima had been questioned over and over for five hours. The officers demanded details of her underground house church and the people who attended it – names, descriptions, times of meetings. She had held firm throughout, despite the officers' threats and intimidation.

This interrogation room was the result of her conversion from Islam. Early one morning, six men from the intelligence services had burst into Shima's house. "They searched everything," she says. "They took our books, our phones, our laptops."

Without her work laptop and unable to do her job, Shima was fired. She was close to graduating from university, but couldn't register for the final course without access to her personal phone. She suspects university staff were pressured to blacklist her. Even before she was arrested, Shima's faith had cost so much.

But she wouldn't renounce Jesus – and she was equipped for this interrogation. She'd done an

online discipleship and leadership programme supported by Open Doors partners outside of Iran. "In those 18 months, I grew spiritually and emotionally," she says. "I learned how to endure persecution and live out my faith wisely. One of the things we learned was how to handle interrogation – what to say, what not to say and how to remain calm. That knowledge helped me so much when I was taken in."

Armed with this training, Shima managed to dodge the officers' traps. She was released and, to this day, serves Jesus in Iran. "I want to help build a generation that is rooted in Christ, not shaken by fear," she says. "Please don't forget us in your prayers. God is working; miracles are happening. Yet, the challenges are real."

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Oh Lord, bless Shima's ministry. Give her wisdom as she helps raise up a new generation of the Iranian church, and equip these believers as they face opposition from the authorities. Restore hope to Shima and others who have lost jobs, education or community because of their faith, and open new doors for them. Amen.

GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

In your *Open Doors World Watch List Top 10*, you've met Christians who are persevering despite everything done and said to oppose them. In the face of threats, fear, rejection and violence, they are holding tight to Jesus. They believe Him when He says that, with God, all things are possible.

Today, you can stand alongside them through your prayers and gifts. Your prayers for the persecuted church are your strongest weapon in this fight. Please remember Eun-Yeong, Aweis, Khaled, Rafat, Hiwot, Juliette, Abraham, Anwar and Shima. Remember those whose names we can't know. Remember each Christian who sees that faith should be impossible in human terms – and chooses faith anyway.

Your gift today can equip Open Doors partners and fieldworkers as

they support Christians from the 10 hardest places on earth to follow Jesus. Your gift is an opportunity to be part of God's impossible plan.

Every £25 could provide safe housing, food and spiritual aid to a believer who has fled extreme persecution.

Every £37 could help a persecuted Christian receive hope and healing through trauma care.

Every £86 gives a Bible and theological training to a believer who has fled persecution, so they are equipped to lead in the underground church.

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