



LIGHT OF THE WORLD

THE OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE

Even in North Korea
God is not silent



2024 Volume 1

Saleh's dangerous faith – and your amazing support

In Yemen, one of the most dangerous places to follow Jesus, your support is helping a remarkable man to bravely lead the underground church.



Saleh's* phone beeps ominously. He picks it up... Another death threat. "They are searching for you," the message reads. "You are dead. Your days are numbered."

The words are shockingly sinister. But they won't stop this courageous Yemeni evangelist from telling people about Jesus.

"If we sit at home and do nothing, we would be safe," says Saleh* with a shrug. "But what kind of Christians would we be if we weren't risking our life for others to know Life?"

Saleh is one of Open Doors remarkable partners in Yemen, the most dangerous country in the Middle East for followers of Jesus – and the fifth most dangerous in the world (according to Open Doors' World Watch List). In this Islamic state, it's impossible to live as a Christian. Persecution comes from government, family and community, and the influence of extreme and violent Islamic groups is growing.

Around 70% of believers keep their faith secret and never meet another believer. If their faith is discovered, Christians risk abuse, imprisonment, torture and even death.

"What kind of Christians would we be if we weren't risking our life?"

So how is it possible for Saleh, in this context, to share the good news of Jesus? The answer: *with your support.*

'The person who knows Jesus'

Saleh was in a refugee camp in a neighbouring country, having fled Yemen's civil war, when he decided to start a house church network in his homeland. He'd come to faith as a student in

Yemen and had developed a reputation as a bold evangelist.

"Your prayers give us strength to keep going."

"In the refugee camp I became known as the person who knows Jesus," recalls Saleh. "Many people came to know Christ as their Saviour and I encouraged them to return to Yemen to serve. We went to a safer part of the country and started a church, where leaders could come to train and be launched into ministry."

Starting a church was a step of faith – but it was perilous. It wasn't long before Saleh's brother and another believer were captured by the Yemeni authorities and thrown into jail.

Going underground

Saleh, at risk because of his high profile, went into hiding – and that's when your prayers sustained him.

"I cried in my room for hours," says Saleh. "Some days I was hopeful and strong. Others, I felt weak, guilty and depressed. In those dark times, I felt God's presence. I received messages from brothers and sisters in the global church, encouraging me that they were praying."

After two months, those prayers were answered. Saleh's brother and the other Christian were released from jail. "God did a miracle!" said Saleh. "He even brought several prisoners to faith through my brother!" And Saleh was able to safely escape from Yemen.

'The Madman'

Today, Saleh travels regularly into Yemen to disciple, teach and pastor other believers. Thanks to your gifts and prayers, he delivers medical help, transport, food packages and training to 70 Yemeni Christian families.

"We are grateful for you," said Saleh. "Without these resources, we won't be able to serve the church. Your prayers are important and uplifting, giving us strength to keep going."

With you standing alongside him, Saleh perseveres in faith and the church in Yemen is strengthened. "I am usually nicknamed 'The Madman' because people know the threats I receive. But all these incidents renew my determination to proclaim the message of Christ," he said.

And Saleh's vision for the future? "I hope soon there will be Christians in every corner of Yemen."

**name changed for security reasons*



PLEASE PRAY FOR

- Pray for hope and joy within the church in Yemen, and strength and encouragement.
- Ask for God's protection over Saleh and other leaders, and wisdom in ministry.
- Pray our brothers and sisters will be guided by the Holy Spirit to bravely share the message of salvation with those who are ready to hear it.



Light in the darkest places

Ji Ho came to faith when she heard the words of Jesus on a tiny radio in North Korea. Believers like her need your support.

Image is representative



Christian persecution is becoming more severe and more widespread. But even in the most dangerous places, God is not silent – and believers need your support.

Uniformed policemen tore apart the small house in North Korea, ransacking drawers and smashing crockery. Others dug furiously in the garden, their shovels spraying dirt.

These officials needed evidence. Proof that the quiet man cowering in the corner with his daughter was a Christian. They got what they came for...

"We knew we'd never see each other again."

"The men found a Bible wrapped in plastic, buried in the garden," said Ji Ho*, who was a schoolgirl at the time. "A policeman triumphantly threw the book at my father's feet. We both sobbed. In that moment, we knew we'd never see each other again."

Ji Ho's father was bundled outside and led away. Ji Ho was all alone.

Most dangerous place

North Korea is the most dangerous place in the world to follow Jesus. The country again tops Open Doors' World Watch List and Christians there are in a perilous situation. In this repressive regime, owning a Bible could lead to jail and faith could put you in a labour camp. Believers risk torture and even execution if discovered.

But even in North Korea, the voice of God cannot be silenced. Ji Ho doesn't know what happened to her father, but years after he was taken, this young woman made an incredible discovery...

Words of Jesus'

Every night Ji Ho tuned into her father's secret transistor radio, desperate for news of food so she wouldn't starve like her neighbours. One day, a new voice interrupted the airwaves.

"I heard a man speaking Korean. It was unlike any state programme. 'You are the salt of the earth,' the voice said. 'These are the words of Jesus, and they remind us never to lose our love for others.'"

Open Doors Philippines
is a ministry serving
persecuted Christians
and churches worldwide.

We supply Bibles,
leadership training,
literacy programs,
livelihood support, and
advocacy services.

We also mobilize the
church in the Philippines
to serve Christians
living under religious
persecution.

**Invite Open Doors
Philippines to speak in
your church! Contact
us to schedule an Open
Doors speaker to lead
your next Prayer Meeting
or (missions) Sunday
Worship.**

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WORLD WATCH

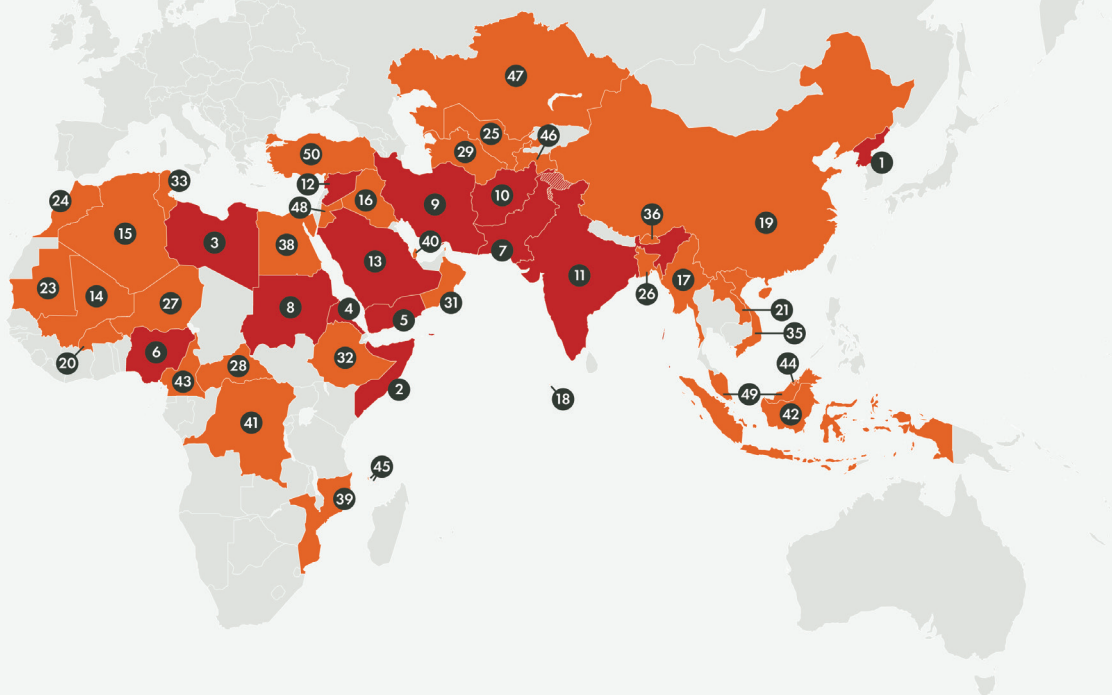
OPEN DOORS' VISION IS THAT NO CHRISTIAN



LIST 2024



OFFERS PERSECUTION ALONE

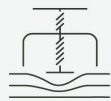


- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| 11 India | 21 Laos | 31 Oman | 41 Congo DR (DRC) |
| 12 Syria | 22 Cuba | 32 Ethiopia | 42 Indonesia |
| 13 Saudi Arabia | 23 Mauritania | 33 Tunisia | 43 Cameroon |
| 14 Mali | 24 Morocco | 34 Colombia | 44 Brunei |
| 15 Algeria | 25 Uzbekistan | 35 Vietnam | 45 Comoros |
| 16 Iraq | 26 Bangladesh | 36 Bhutan | 46 Tajikistan |
| 17 Myanmar | 27 Niger | 37 Mexico | 47 Kazakhstan |
| 18 Maldives | 28 Central African Republic | 38 Egypt | 48 Jordan |
| 19 China | 29 Turkmenistan | 39 Mozambique | 49 Malaysia |
| 20 Burkina Faso | 30 Nicaragua | 40 Qatar | 50 Turkey |

Find out more about the Top 50 countries at www.opendoors.ph

ABOUT THE LIST

The World Watch List is compiled by Open Doors' analysts using real-world data from experts on the ground in 150 countries. Persecution in each country is recorded using a points system which tracks violence and pressure. This measures the number and severity of violent incidents against Christians and the degree of pressure exerted against the practice of their faith in 5 spheres of life.



PRESSURE

Degree of pressure in 5 spheres of Christian life

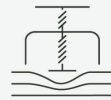


VIOLENCE

Number and severity of violent incidents against Christians and church



Maximum score: 16.7



+



=

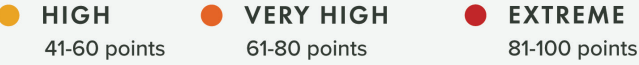


MAX SCORE
= 83.3

MAX SCORE
= 16.7

MAX SCORE
= 100

PERSECUTION LEVELS



Every country on the list is ranked as having very high or extreme levels of persecution, showing the intensity of persecution against Christians.

TOTAL SCORE

1	North Korea	96
2	Somalia	93
3	Libya	91
4	Eritrea	89
5	Yemen	89
6	Nigeria	88
7	Pakistan	87
8	Sudan	87
9	Iran	86
10	Afghanistan	84
11	India	83
12	Syria	81
13	Saudi Arabia	81
14	Mali	79
15	Algeria	79
16	Iraq	79
17	Myanmar	79
18	Maldives	78
19	China	78
20	Burkina Faso	75
21	Laos	75
22	Cuba	73
23	Mauritania	72
24	Morocco	71
25	Uzbekistan	71
26	Bangladesh	71
27	Niger	70
28	Central African Republic	70
29	Turkmenistan	70
30	Nicaragua	70
31	Oman	69
32	Ethiopia	69
33	Tunisia	69
34	Colombia	68
35	Vietnam	68
36	Bhutan	68
37	Mexico	68
38	Egypt	68
39	Mozambique	68
40	Qatar	67
41	Congo DR (DRC)	67
42	Indonesia	66
43	Cameroon	66
44	Brunei	66
45	Comoros	66
46	Tajikistan	66
47	Kazakhstan	65
48	Jordan	65
49	Malaysia	64
50	Turkey	64

Ji Ho was stunned, overcome by a powerful memory. “I nearly dropped my tea,” she said. “This was what my father told me, almost word for word, many years ago.”

Faith, despite the cost

From then on, Ji Ho listened... and God spoke. “I became convinced,” she said. “This Jesus was the teacher my father had been trying to tell me about.”

“This Jesus was the teacher my father spoke about.”

Ji Ho gave her life to Christ. But like the estimated 400,000 believers in North Korea, her faith remains secret and she faces a daily struggle for survival. Poverty is rife across the nation, and although customs doors have opened with Russia and China since the Covid-19 pandemic, food imports are directed first towards the elite and the military. Half the population has no secure food supply.

It’s a desperate situation – both spiritually and physically. Ji Ho says, “I might be the only Christian in my country.”

Believers like Ji Ho need to know they are not alone. Only the love, prayers and support of

their global church family can help courageous Christians follow Jesus in the darkest places.

Life and death

For 25 years, Open Doors has stood with North Korean believers, working through secret networks to provide food and medicine. In fact, 100,000 Christians receive vital spiritual support thanks to your generosity. Now more than ever, believers like Ji Ho look to God and their global family in Christ, including us here in the Philippines, to help them survive.

Your support can broadcast daily gospel radio programmes to strengthen the faith of isolated believers like Ji Ho, and provide emergency food to keep North Korean Christians from starvation. Your gifts and prayers are critical.

“Now I realise why my father was taken,” says Ji Ho. “Our leaders don’t want us to worship anyone besides them, and my father had a Lord who was bigger than our country’s leaders.”

She added, “I’m a Christian now, like my father. I hope someday I can meet another follower of Jesus. For now, I’ll keep listening to the radio. I’ll keep following Jesus. And I’ll keep being salt and light. Just like my father told me.”

**Ji Ho represents the real experiences of secret believers in North Korea, whose accounts of true events have been combined to protect their identities.*



80,000

North Korean Christians
are kept alive with food



100,000

Christians receive
spiritual support,



400,000

Christians estimated
to live in North Korea

YOUR IMPACT

Your support in the darkest places

When Pastor Zachariah came home to find his wife and son dead and his village destroyed, he was broken.
But your support is bringing hope and healing.

You stood with Pastor Zachariah, from Nigeria, in the midst of extreme persecution. Thank you.

Pastor Zachariah can't forget the day his life changed forever. Returning to his village in central Nigeria after a night away, he saw people coming towards him...

"Most of them were barefoot. Their bodies were covered in mud because they'd been crawling to escape. The closer I got to home, the more I saw people with injuries. And then, dead bodies beside the road."

"I felt as if God had forsaken me."

The scene was horrifying. But nothing prepared Pastor Zachariah for what he discovered next.

"My house was completely burnt down. I searched for my wife and son, checking the rooms. I found their lifeless bodies in the kitchen. That moment, I cried like never before. Death was truly painful."

Pastor Zachariah's village, in Plateau state, had been attacked by Fulani militants who (we believe) were seeking to forcefully displace Christians. It was one of 27 villages in the Mangu area destroyed in May 2023, and 125 people were killed. The brutality of the attack reflects the extreme violence of persecution in Nigeria, which is among the world's most dangerous places to follow Jesus.

For Pastor Zachariah, what happened was devastating. "I felt as if God had forsaken me. Why would he allow these people to attack us? I couldn't sleep and, no matter what I was doing, I kept thinking about it."

"Right now, I am asking God to forgive the attackers."

Your gifts and prayers are bringing hope in this dark place, so that persecuted Christians know they are not alone.

Thanks to your support, Pastor Zachariah was invited to Open Doors trauma centre in Nigeria – and at last, he's finding peace. "Since I came to the centre, my mind is at rest," he said.

This faithful leader is now able to encourage and support his congregation, urging them to stay close to God. Remarkably, Pastor Zachariah has even found the strength to forgive the men who murdered his beloved wife and son. "Right now, I am asking God to forgive the attackers, and for them to enter the Kingdom of God and not to die in their sins," he said.

Pastor Zachariah added, "My prayer is that we rely on God because He is everything we live for. If we believe He can do all things, then we will not be broken."



PLEASE PRAY FOR

- Pastor Zachariah, that God will meet him in grief and bring healing and courage.
- Christians around Mangu, who are traumatised and displaced. Ask God to comfort them.
- People attending Open Doors trauma centre, that faith will be strengthened and hope restored.



Will you help Christians survive in the darkest places?

PLEASE PRAY

- For Christians like Ji Ho. Ask God to strengthen and be with them, so they will not feel alone.
- For Christians in North Korea facing starvation this winter, that support will reach them through Open Doors secret networks.
- For North Korean believers bravely passing on faith to their children. Pray for wisdom and courage.

PLEASE GIVE

Every PHP 1,500 provides a food package to a North Korean believer to keep them alive.

Every PHP 3,000 supports our radio broadcast ministry that reaches isolated believers even in countries like North Korea.

Every PHP 5,000 supports a Christian in a country like North Korea to undergo a persecution-preparedness training.

DISCOVER THE TOP 10 MOST DANGEROUS PLACES TO BE A CHRISTIAN

Look out for the World Watch List 2024, out on January 17. Visit www.opendoors.ph