



# Open*Doors*

**MAGAZINE**

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2025

## **MEET JOO MIN**

**AND THE BELIEVERS  
WHO DARE TO  
SHARE JESUS**

**STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST**

[www.opendoorscanada.org](http://www.opendoorscanada.org)

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Open Doors Canada  
8-19 Brownridge Rd.  
Halton Hills, ON L7G 0C6

(905) 636-0944  
[www.opendoorscanada.org](http://www.opendoorscanada.org)  
[opendoors@odcan.org](mailto:opendoors@odcan.org)



/OpenDoorsCanada

*Cover image: North Korea has been top, or near the top, of the World Watch List for more than 20 years. Christianity is completely forbidden and there are no churches or Christians who openly follow Jesus. Read more on page 4.*

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## GARY'S TAKE

Dear Friend,

**The faith of persecuted Christians is bold, but so can our prayers for them be!**

Ephesians 3:18 admonishes us to “be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” It is a challenge that comes immediately following the passage describing the Christian’s armour. Paul knows that boldness in prayer is essential to winning battles because it connects us to the power of God. He wants the churches he has planted to fully understand this principle.

In this issue we share the story of Joo Min\* who is one of the boldest Christians I know. Imagine risking everything to return to North Korea, the most dangerous place on earth for a Christian to live. Joo Min knows if she is discovered, she faces severe punishment which likely will include torture and banishment to a brutal labour camp.

I am often overwhelmed by the magnitude of what persecuted Christians must endure for the sake of the Gospel. I feel a sense of helplessness in knowing how to respond or to move the needle in their favour. But that’s when I remember that praying consistently and boldly, is the very best that I can do, knowing I have been called to “be alert and keep on praying.” Hopefully my boldness in praying for them can match the boldness of their faith.

In North Korea, food is most scarce during winter. Pray boldly for provision for God’s people, for unexpected hidden manna in prison camps and anywhere Christians struggle to find food. Pray boldly today for Joo Min and others like her as they do the dangerous work of ministering to our family members there.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg  
Executive Director





# WHEN BELIEVERS DARE

Joo Min\* is part of North Korea's small but faithful church. She risks everything to follow Jesus. Believers facing extreme persecution, like Joo Min, depend on your support.

**As the World Watch List 2025 reveals the most dangerous places to be a Christian, meet one believer who dares to share Jesus in North Korea – and discover why she needs your help.**

On the North Korea border, in the dead of night, Joo Min\* crouches by a riverbank. Her heart is thumping and her breathing is fast. A guard comes into view and Joo Min freezes while he passes, a machine gun swinging by his side.

It's incredibly dangerous for Joo Min to be here. After all, North Korea is the world's most repressive, controlling regime.

But Joo Min is not escaping her homeland, as you might think. This young woman is risking everything to go back to North Korea – because she's on a mission to share Jesus.

## **DRIVEN OUT, CALLED BACK**

Joo Min never expected to be in this position. She fled North Korea to seek work during the mid-1990s, when the country was struck by extreme food shortages (and some three million people died from starvation). Joo Min's father, an alcoholic, couldn't provide for the family and gave his

daughter no choice but to leave in search of food and money.

Joo Min wasn't a Christian then. Like all North Korean children, she'd been indoctrinated at school and believed missionaries were 'like wolves pretending to be sheep'. But after crossing the border, Joo Min found refuge at an Open Doors safe house – and things began to change.

"At the safe house, I heard the gospel for the first time," said Joo Min. "Despite what I was told as a child, I accepted Jesus as my saviour. I started attending Bible studies and training every week."

With help from Open Doors, Joo Min established a life outside North Korea. She found a job and sent support to her family back home. She grew in faith, got baptized and forgave her father.

Then one day, Joo Min felt God calling her to the most perilous, daring task you could imagine.

"I felt God was telling me: Go back to North Korea. I felt called to share everything I've learned with other secret believers in my homeland."

## **EXTREME RISK**

North Korea has been top, or near the top, of the World Watch List for more than 20 years. Christianity is completely forbidden and there



are no churches or Christians who openly follow Jesus. If a secret believer is discovered, he or she faces severe punishment – including torture, interrogation or life in a labour camp. Owning a Bible can mean a death sentence.

But despite the danger, Open Doors estimates there are around 400,000 Christians in North Korea. They operate in secret, meeting in small, trusted groups to read the Bible and memorize verses. And among them are extraordinary people like Joo Min – who risk everything to share the gospel.

“I made the decision to cross the river again,” says Joo Min, who now lives in North Korea and serves the underground church. “I know the risks. If I am caught, I could end up in a labour camp paying a heavy price for being a Christian.”

## GIFTS AND PRAYERS

Joo Min’s ministry is only possible because of the training and discipleship provided by people like you. Along the North Korea border, Open Doors runs a secret network of safe houses offering spiritual support to deepen the faith of believers. Through the network, we distribute Bibles and Christian material, and provide food, medicine and living essentials so Christians can survive.

Today, amid tightening regulations and brutal crackdowns, it’s more dangerous than ever to follow Jesus in North Korea. Christians here are the most persecuted in the world – and they need your support.

Your gifts and prayers can strengthen Christians like Joo Min, who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places. “Please pray for me,” says Joo Min. “Pray for protection and courage, so I can be light in a land overshadowed by darkness.”

*\*Because of the extreme risk to North Korean believers, we’ve disguised ‘Joo Min’. Her story is taken from accounts of two believers and details have been changed. Photos show an actor.*

The Open Doors 2025 World Watch List launches on January 15, 2025.

**Download your free World Watch List Prayer Guide** to pray for believers who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places.

Visit [www.worldwatchlist.ca](http://www.worldwatchlist.ca) to download.



## Will you support Christians who dare to share Jesus?

### PLEASE GIVE

**Every \$35** provides Bibles to two believers facing extreme persecution, so they can meet God in his Word.

**Every \$69** strengthens the faith of a family of North Korean refugees by providing a safe house for six months, alongside other believers.

**Every \$81** provides biblical leadership training to a woman like Joo Min, who has fled North Korea.

### PLEASE PRAY

- Lift up our courageous brothers and sisters in North Korea as they dare to share Jesus, trusting that God will bear fruit in this persecuted church.
- Pray for Open Doors workers who are discipling and training North Korean believers right now, in safe houses along the border. Pray for wisdom.

# WORLD WATCH LIST 2025

An annual ranking of the top 50 most dangerous countries in which to live as a Christian. **COMING JANUARY 15**

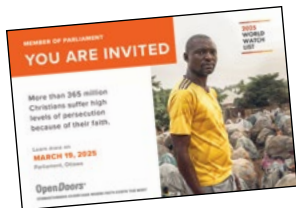
## 1 INVITE YOUR MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT TO A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF THE 2025 WORLD WATCH LIST AT PARLIAMENT

On March 19th, we will be heading to Ottawa once again to present the 2025 World Watch List to our parliamentarians.

This special presentation of the World Watch List is our opportunity to inform the Canadian Government about the current realities for the more than 365 million Christians worldwide who experience high levels of persecution and engage them in championing policies that promote freedom of religion and protect persecuted believers.

You have been instrumental to the success of this event in the past. In previous years you have sent post cards, written emails and made phone calls inviting your Members of Parliament asking them to attend. Would you do it again?

Enclosed with this magazine, we have included a postcard for you to fill out and send to your MP. Sending an invitation is easy!



1. Grab the post card included in this magazine
2. Fill out your MP's name, your name and postal code
3. And lastly, drop it in the mailbox – no stamp required!

You can also send your MP an invite by email by visiting:  
[www.opendoorscanada.org/inviteyourmp](http://www.opendoorscanada.org/inviteyourmp)

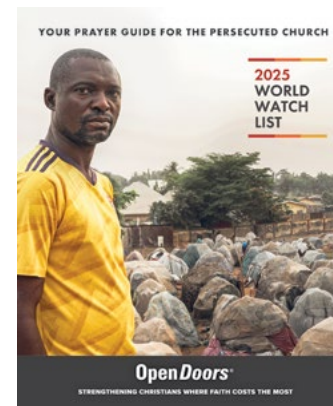
## 2 YOU ARE INVITED to the online 2025 World Watch List release event on Sunday, January 19, 7pm EST

VIEW ONLINE AT:

[www.youtube.com/OpenDoorsCanada](http://www.youtube.com/OpenDoorsCanada)

## 3 GET YOUR FREE COPY OF THE 2025 WORLD WATCH LIST

Visit [www.opendoorscanada.org/WorldWatchList](http://www.opendoorscanada.org/WorldWatchList) to download your free guide. (Available for download on January 15).



If you prefer a hard copy of the 2025 World Watch List prayer guide, you can return the enclosed slip with your request for a hard copy or contact the office.\*

Call: (905) 636-0944  
Email: [opendoors@odcan.org](mailto:opendoors@odcan.org)

\*Shipping to Canadian addresses only

# STILL DARING TO SHARE JESUS, THANKS TO YOU



Simply being a Christian carries risk in Iran, so imagine the danger facing leaders of the underground church. Fatemeh\* says your support keeps her going.

Ever since Fatemeh\*, aged 20, first heard the gospel, following Jesus has been a journey of challenge, risk and danger.

Neighbours can report people if they hear worship, and there are no resources to learn from. Police raids deter people from keeping even a small Bible hidden at home.

And over the years, one by one, pastors have fled the country. “We had become Christians, but we didn’t know how to live like one,” Fatemeh remembers.

When protests broke out across Iran in 2021, following the death of a young woman in police custody, things became even harder.

“The government sees our faith as a threat,” says Fatemeh, whose husband was jailed during the riots. “We live under constant surveillance and face different kinds of pressure. It’s a daily battle to keep our faith in such hostile conditions.”

## EMPOWERING LEADERS

Today, Iran is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian. It’s a crime to be part of a house church and the constant fear of arrest and imprisonment takes its toll.

But still Fatemeh dares to share Jesus – because of your faithful support.

Thanks to you, Fatemeh has attended conferences and training events outside Iran where her faith is strengthened. When at home, Fatemeh joins online Bible studies and prayer meetings so she knows she’s not alone. Your generous gifts and prayers empower this remarkable woman for ministry.

“In every meeting, I feel the presence of God and the support of my brothers and sisters in Christ,” says Fatemeh. “It renews my spirit and gives me the courage to face each day.”

## SHARING JESUS

Now Fatemeh leads a small house

church in Iran, where she encourages young couples to trust God. She visits hospitals to pray with patients and families and share the gospel. And she holds fast to Christ, despite her fears for her daughter Shirin\*.

“I am not afraid to lose my life for Jesus, but I wonder what will happen to my daughter without us,” says Fatemeh. “I don’t want to only speak about the love of Jesus, I want to love people the way Jesus loves me.”

She added, “I share our experiences, how Jesus worked in our lives in the midst of persecution and through the challenges. We know persecution might increase, but we are not alone. God and His people are with us!”

\*Names changed and identity concealed due to the extreme risk

## PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Fatemeh, and her incredible courage and faithfulness. Pray for her ministry and safety.
- Pray for Shirin, Fatemeh’s daughter, that she will know God’s peace and healing amid the danger.
- Ask that Christian resources and support will continue to reach Iranian house churches and believers who need it.





# PLACED BY GOD, SUPPORTED BY YOU



**Zahra's\* ministry partner was murdered in cold blood. But she dares to share Jesus in Yemen, one of the most dangerous places to be a Christian, because of you.**

The words coming through the phone shook Zahra\* to her core: "Anis\* has been killed."

Zahra and Anis were mission partners in Yemen. He used to minister to the men while Zahra served the women. She loved their work – and it was fruitful!

But one day Anis received a threatening message. A week later, he was shot in his own home, in front of his children. "I was shocked. For a month, I didn't go out," said Zahra with tears in her eyes. "Would I be next?"

Yemen is one of the most

dangerous places in the world to follow Jesus. Islam is the national religion and Sharia law is the source of all legislation. Meanwhile, a 10-year civil war has pushed the country to a perilous state. Half the population faces hunger, 4.5 million people are displaced, and some areas are controlled by Islamist groups The Houthis, al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

For Zahra, life in Yemen is unbearably hard. Growing up in a Christian family, she endured relentless persecution. The murder of Anis left her terrified.

But your support strengthens Zahra – and gives her the courage to keep sharing Jesus.

"We live among wolves, and we know that," Zahra says. "I have chosen this way, and I know the trials that come with it. Jesus took my pain, suffering and guilt. Now it is my turn to carry the cross."

## "EVERYONE DESERVES TO HEAR ABOUT GOD'S LOVE"

Your gifts provide leadership coaching to Zahra – she's on a two-year course with Open Doors – and supply food and medicine to Yemeni believers. You also support safe houses, trauma healing and discipleship training.

Today, Zahra is one of a handful of people who dares to share the gospel with Yemeni women. Knowing you stand with her makes the difference – and the underground church is growing.

"I know that sometimes, when I enter a house to share the gospel with a woman, I might not come back out," says Zahra. "But I believe God put me in this place to impact the lives of these women, to bring hope and reflect the true light of Christ amid the horrific situation we live in."

She added: "I am determined to stay here despite the risks, because I believe everyone deserves to hear about God's love. I am encouraged when I see how the church in Yemen is growing, even in secret! We dream with God and we know there are Christians here living for our Lord."

\*Names changed due to the extreme risk

## PLEASE PRAY

"Your prayers keep us going. We are protected by your prayers. Please pray we will always be close to God, to be sensitive to His voice and what He calls us to do. We live in blessing because of your prayer support."

- Salman\*, a church leader in Yemen

# GOOD NEWS!

## YOUR PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED: CHRISTIAN CAPTIVE ESCAPES



*Because of your prayers, Alice Loksha was able to escape her captors and return home.*

Praise God! Alice Loksha, held captive by extremists for six years, successfully escaped at the end of 2024! A 42-year-old mother of two and Christian nurse working with UNICEF, she was kidnapped in 2018 by adherents of Boko Haram in Nigeria. In the years since, she was forcibly married to two different officers and gave birth to one child. Christians worldwide have been praying for her freedom, and she was finally able to escape with her son and return home. Please continue to pray – she now has years of trauma that she has had to endure, and it can be incredibly difficult for captives to reintegrate into their social and relational circles.

## YOUR GENEROSITY PROVIDES AN INCOME FOR CHRISTIANS IN CENTRAL ASIA



*Through your kindness and generosity, Irina was able to open a bakery that allows her husband to focus on pastoral ministry in Central Asia.*

Central Asian Christian Irina (pseudonym) is married to a pastor. As a full-time minister, her husband could only provide for the family through the small collections of donations he would receive occasionally. Because of your generous giving, Open Doors local partners were able to help Irina to open a small bakery and scale it. Her business provides a sustainable income and allows Irina to take the pressure off her husband to provide for their family so he can focus his energy on serving God. Through their work as a couple, people are learning about Jesus in Central Asia!



## TRAVEL WITH US IN 2025

### AFRICA

June 2025

### MIDDLE EAST

October 2025

Ignite your faith and go deeper in your journey with the persecuted church by travelling to them.

Open Doors Canada offers a few trips every year to visit with the persecuted church. Worship in an underground church. Pray with a secret believer. And learn what it means to serve the persecuted and strengthen the Church.

If you are interested in more information and to apply, email: [travel@odcan.org](mailto:travel@odcan.org).



# You escape North Korea...

## What would make you go back?

Imagine escaping the darkest place on earth, where persecution of Christians is severe. But you feel God telling you to go back to share the gospel. Do you dare?

Joo Min\* dared.

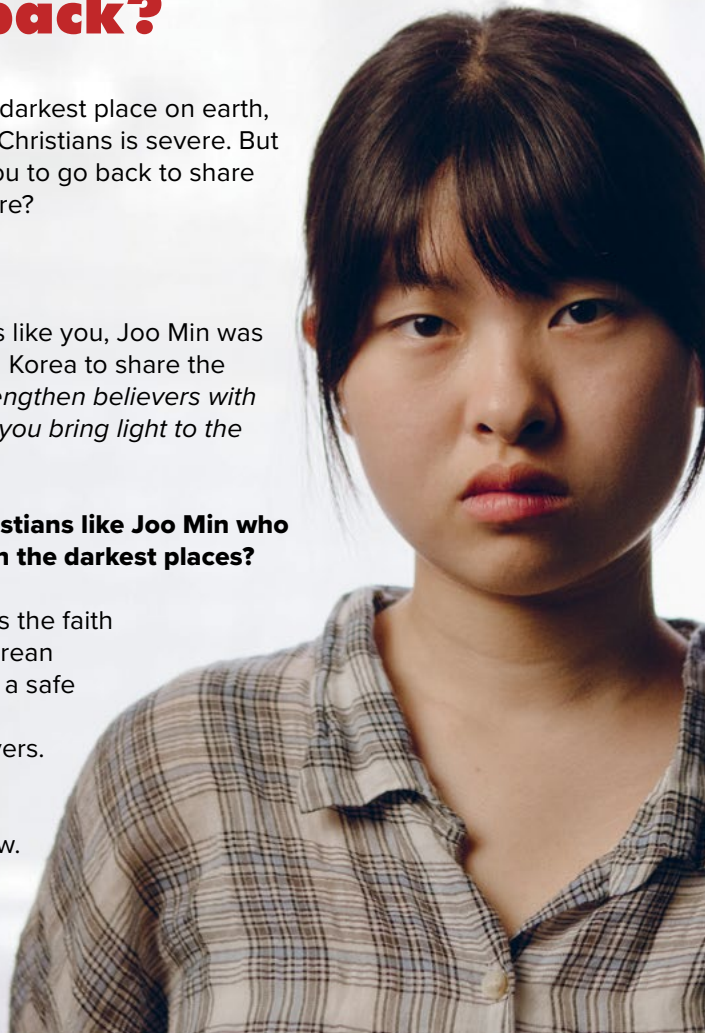
Because of supporters like you, Joo Min was able to return to North Korea to share the gospel. *When you strengthen believers with your gift and prayers, you bring light to the darkest places.*

**Will you support Christians like Joo Min who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places?**

**Every \$69** strengthens the faith of a family of North Korean refugees by providing a safe house for six months, alongside other believers.

Visit [www.opendoorscanada.org](http://www.opendoorscanada.org) to give now.  
Thank you.

\*Name changed and re-enactment image used for security reasons.



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