

# Open*Doors*

**MAGAZINE**

MARCH | APRIL 2025

**PERSECUTED  
BUT CLOTHED  
WITH DIGNITY**

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

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*Cover image: Jorina, from Bangladesh, can't ever forget the shame and trauma of persecution. But she still follows Jesus. Read more on page 4.*



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## GARY'S TAKE

Dear Friend,

Our research has shown for some time now that women and girls are disproportionately affected by persecution. Besides the discrimination they face for their Christian faith, long-held gender biases and cultural norms compound to make women and girls targets of egregious persecution that is often hidden, violent and complex.

In this issue we share the story of Jorina from Bangladesh, who was publicly stripped and shamed because of her conversion to Christianity. It outlines her journey to wholeness and dignity, to where she is now helping other women who have experienced the same kind of cruelty that she did.

Open Doors strives to minister to persecuted women and girls by offering intervention strategies that target their specific needs. We offer trauma counselling, supporting victims of sexual or other forms of violence, and forced marriage. We provide vocational training, leading to employment or self-employment, and assistance to start a small business. In cases where women are navigating legal challenges, we stand with them until justice is served. Ongoing medical and spiritual care provides healing and comfort so women can rebuild their lives and move forward with dignity.

The Bible speaks repeatedly of our responsibility to advocate for those who are unable to defend themselves. Psalm 82:3-4 says, *"Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."* Open Doors Advocacy continues to work both locally and internationally to promote policies and practices that improve protections for persecuted women and girls so they can live with dignity and strength.

Your prayers and generosity are helping persecuted women and girls find healing, dignity, and hope.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg  
Executive Director





# SEE DIGNITY RESTORED



Jorina, from Bangladesh, can't ever forget the shame and trauma of persecution. But she still follows Jesus. Will you help her clothe other women with dignity and strength?

**Jorina, in Bangladesh, was publicly stripped and shamed. Now she's restoring dignity to other persecuted women – and she needs your help.**

Jorina entered the house feeling a bit mystified, yet hopeful. Fifteen women from her village had invited her there and she thought they wanted to hear about her new faith in Jesus.

But instead, Jorina was walking into a horrifying ordeal...

What happened in that room stripped Jorina of her dignity and left her humiliated. She sobs as she recalls the trauma.

"They wanted to look for a 'seal' on my body, a mark that I was a Christian," says Jorina through tears. A local myth, based on a misreading of Ephesians 1:13, means people believe converts are literally 'marked' when they follow Jesus. "I had no choice. I undressed in front of them and they began searching everywhere on my body. It was very sensitive and deeply shameful. I cried a lot in that room."

It was one of the most painful moments of Jorina's life. For a long time, she could not talk about the incident. But this strong,

courageous woman would not let persecution break her faith.

## SHAME CULTURE

In Bangladesh, where Jorina lives, women are viewed as less valuable than men. Their lives are dangerous and difficult. Gender-based violence is generally accepted. For women who are also followers of Jesus, their suffering is doubled.

Just 0.3% of Bangladeshis are Christians, and women who convert from Islam (like Jorina) are at extreme risk. Husbands can disown them, children may be taken away, and women can be thrown out of the family home.

And in this community-based culture, there's one powerful secret weapon of persecution: shame. So when the village women stripped Jorina naked and publicly degraded her, they knew she would truly suffer.

## NOTHING TO HIDE

But in the wake of the attack, Jorina sought Jesus – and Jesus helped her forgive. "I can't live with anger anymore," Jorina smiles. "After receiving Christ and reading from the gospels, I can now love others and treat them well."

Jorina came to faith alongside her husband some years ago, and the couple have two children. They've

received death threats and the children have been targeted by persecutors. Once, Jorina's son revealed, "My friends tell me they will burn us alive."

But Jorina kept on sharing the gospel with Muslim neighbours. "When we received Christ we didn't feel the need to hide it from others," says Jorina simply. "We believed we needed to share the truth."

God has been faithful... People have come to know Jesus. There are 25 families in the couple's house church, which has been

supported by Open Doors for years. Now, Jorina has an additional ministry with women – and she needs your support.

#### CLOTHED WITH DIGNITY

"For Islamic leaders in my village, Christian women are as good as dead," says Jorina. "Within Muslim society, women are often neglected. But in Christianity, we value women and want them to know the way to heaven."

Jorina has completed Open Doors' discipleship training program called 'Ananna', which means

'unique woman'. She's running the course for local women to clothe them with dignity, and remind them of their status and identity as daughters of God.

But there's a huge need. Without vital support, Christian women are intensely vulnerable. They feel alone and forgotten, their suffering is often hidden, and many risk losing hope.

Our vision is to ensure every woman persecuted for her faith and gender is seen, valued, and empowered to reach her God-given potential. Your gifts and prayers can support Jorina's work in Bangladesh, and provide trauma care for persecuted women, safe spaces for believers, and training in job-related skills like sewing and hairdressing.

Persecuted women need to be restored and strengthened to live as powerful witnesses for Christ. Your support can make it happen.

In the words of Jorina's heartfelt prayer, "May women come to know Jesus and find their way to heaven. May we continue to stand firm so that, through us, many others may receive salvation."



**"SHE IS CLOTHED  
WITH STRENGTH  
AND DIGNITY;  
SHE CAN LAUGH  
AT THE DAYS  
TO COME."**

PROVERBS 31:25

In Jorina's house church, women learn they are loved and valued as daughters of God – and faith grows!

## Will you clothe persecuted women with strength and dignity?

#### PLEASE GIVE

**Every \$29** could give Bibles to two persecuted women so they read God's word.

**Every \$60** could provide discipleship training to strengthen a woman facing persecution.

**Every \$78** could give a month of vital practical support to two persecuted women.

#### PLEASE PRAY

- Jorina is resilient but her life is hard. Ask God to meet her daily needs and strengthen her for ministry.
- For Christian women in Bangladesh, that love and grace would win over shame and hatred.
- For persecuted women everywhere to be empowered by the knowledge that they are daughters of God.



# CLOTHED WITH PRAYER

**Persecution strips women  
of dignity. But you can  
clothe them with strength  
and hope, through your  
prayers today.**



**AISHA\***  
Central Asia

When a mob of 500 people arrived at Aisha's home, including 80 family members, they wanted one thing: to see the family renounce their Christian faith and return to Islam.

Aisha watched heartbroken as her husband Halil\* turned his back on Jesus. Then, it was her turn. "Jesus Christ is Lord," she told the crowd boldly. ("It was scary but somehow I felt so strong at that moment," Aisha said afterwards).

In an instant, Aisha and her four children were thrown out of the village. They took refuge in a church in the capital city. But they need a permanent home and ongoing support.

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray urgently that Aisha can find somewhere safe to live, and for work so she can provide for her children.
- Ask God to reconcile Aisha and Halil and reunite this family. Pray Halil will remember his love for Jesus and return.



**LAILA**  
Egypt

Laila lost her friends, her home and her extended family when she gave her life to Jesus.

Stripped of all the things that once formed her identity, this young teenager was lost. She even considered taking her life. "I don't know who I am, what is my identity. I don't feel like I belong, I only feel rejected," she confided.

Today, Laila is discipled by an Open Doors partner and plays in her local house church band. But as a covert from Islam, her struggles are not over.

## PLEASE PRAY

- Place Laila in the Lord's arms as His precious daughter, and pray she knows her identity is fully found in Christ.
- Pray Laila will have opportunities to share her faith with Muslim friends. Ask God to give her courage.
- Pray for women believers in Egypt, that they will be valued and empowered to reach their God-given potential.



**YASMINA\***  
North Africa

Yasmina's parents both died when she was in her 20s – and, in grief, Yasmina started searching for meaning beyond her own Muslim faith. She found Jesus. "I tasted true joy and peace," she said. "I entrusted my life to the Lord Jesus Christ."

But following Jesus brought suffering. Yasmina's husband, also a believer, received a prison sentence for 'conducting non-Muslim worship' without authorisation. The couple were forced to leave their homeland. Yasmina hopes to return one day – and she needs your prayers.

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray that Yasmina and her husband Saleh\* will be able to return to their homeland and live as Christians without fear.
- Pray for Christian women in the region, whose persecution is often hidden. Ask God to clothe them with dignity.
- Pray for the safety and protection of all believers facing persecution in North Africa.

# AN EVANGELIST EMPOWERED

Shompa Roy has been persecuted relentlessly in Bangladesh. But because of your gifts and prayers, she keeps sharing the gospel – and her church is growing.

It's hard to imagine a life more difficult than Shompa Roy's.

This remarkable woman, who lives in Bangladesh, has been persecuted ever since she heard a travelling evangelist share the gospel and gave her life to Christ.

Persecution started small... villagers

blocked the only path to the home Shompa Roy shared with her husband, also a believer. But it became worse.

There was the time a group of women tied her up and tried to shame Shompa Roy and force her to renounce her faith. Another occasion, a Muslim man violently

beat up Shompa Roy and attacked her 11-year-old daughter. One day, her cow and goats were poisoned. Then the family's only toilet (which they share with the church) was smashed.

Some people's faith might be shaken amid such relentless attacks. But you have given Shompa Roy the strength to keep going.

## TRAINING, PRAYER AND PRACTICAL HELP

Your gifts provided Shompa Roy's church with a new toilet, immediately after the old one was vandalized. She also received a bicycle, so she can safely travel from one village to another to share the good news.

You helped the family financially when persecution meant Shompa Roy's husband couldn't find work. And Shompa Roy has attended Open Doors training, to strengthen her faith and identity as a daughter of God.

Now, this bold evangelist lives as a powerful witness for Christ. In a culture where it's dangerous and difficult to be a woman, Shompa Roy will not be silenced.

"We Christians do not discriminate based on gender. We are equally respected in the eyes of the Lord, so I challenge Hindu men who are

derogatory towards women," said Shompa Roy, who has brought more than 140 people to the Lord.

"In my church, women are growing spiritually. They are getting more active in the church. I want the women to be effective and lead the church."

Because of you, Shompa Roy has been empowered to reach her God-given potential. She's restored and clothed with dignity and strength – and now she's transforming the lives of other women too.

"We are very thankful for your support," added Shompa Roy. "You have prayed and supported my family and church."

## PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Shompa Roy's extraordinary courage and faith. Pray she and her children will be safe as neighbours continue to persecute the family.
- Some believers in Shompa Roy's church have turned away from Jesus under the pressure of persecution. Pray they will know the depth of God's love.
- Pray for Bangladesh's tiny Christian community (0.3% of the population). Ask God to strengthen and encourage them in the darkest days.





# 'I AM STAYING WITH CHRIST.'

When Batoul\* followed her father and gave her life to Jesus, she had no idea of the suffering ahead. Your support helped her through it.

Physical violence is bad enough. But when it's inflicted by women in your own family, the pain runs deep. "My sisters hit me and encouraged my mum to punish me," says Batoul. "They told my mother to beat me with a cane."

Worse still, it felt like Batoul was

being punished for her father's new faith as well as her own...

Batoul was just 16 when she gave her life to Jesus. It's so dangerous that we can't even tell you the name of the North African country she lives in. Batoul was following in the footsteps of her father, a

former Islamic extremist, whose life had been radically transformed by Christ.

But Batoul's mother and sisters didn't approve. They didn't dare persecute the father – so they turned their anger towards Batoul instead.

"I paid the price for both my father's conversion and my own," said Batoul. "They made me eat alone, so I felt like an animal. My own mother, who should have been tender to me, persecuted me alongside my sisters."

She added, "I had nothing, no family, and my faith was shaken. In that time, I considered ending my life."

## A NEW CHURCH FAMILY

Your support changed everything.

Open Doors' partner Brother Youssef\* heard about Batoul's suffering. He reached out and began to minister to her, reminding this young woman of her status and identity as a daughter of God.

"He said I should talk to Jesus first, and turn to Him for everything in my life," said Batoul.

Thanks to you, Batoul was also welcomed to a secret Open Doors house church. "This church is the family I was searching for as a

lonely believer," she said with a smile. "I felt Christ changing me when I forgave every person who hurt me!"

Now, with your support, Batoul has been empowered to reach her God-given potential. She teaches and prays with other women believers who are rejected by their families. Her family relationships are better, and one sister has started attending prayer meetings.

Batoul said, "Today, I don't feel lonely. I still feel pain and I cry, but I also pray – and through prayer I can get through this. In all the sadness, I behold Christ in my life because I remember He is with me, and I feel joyous.

"I will follow Jesus no matter how hard my experience is. I am staying with Christ."

\*Names changed due to the extreme risk and images are illustrative

## PLEASE PRAY

Give thanks for Batoul's faith and ministry among other women, and ask God to strengthen and guide her.

Pray for women in North Africa, that they will know their identity as daughters of God. Pray boldly for an end to persecution.

## GOOD NEWS

### YOUR SUPPORT IS ALLOWING REFUGEE CHILDREN TO THRIVE



*This group of young soccer players are just a few of the refugees whom you have helped find community through an Open Doors sports ministry in Central Asia.*

Because of your generosity, refugees from Afghanistan are finding community! Following the fall of Afghanistan to the Taliban in 2021, Open Doors partners in Central Asia created a sports ministry to Afghan refugee youth which continues strong to this day. Our partners are able to give young people a sense of community and friendship, instead of the isolation they often feel. It also allows for opportunities to encourage and disciple Christian adults, as well as share the gospel with non-Christians who might bring their children to play sports. In 2024 alone, this ministry impacted over 300 individuals who have lost their home.

### YOUR PRAYERS FREED A CAPTIVE FROM PRISON IN YEMEN



*Take time to thank the Lord that your prayers for your persecuted family resulted in a brother in Christ freed from imprisonment in Yemen!*

Praise God for the release of a brother from prison! A faithful Christian from Yemen, Yousif (not his real name) was imprisoned for three long years for his commitment to the gospel. Despite harsh conditions and persecution, Yousif's faith has only grown stronger, and his testimony is a powerful witness of God's faithfulness. In his trials, Yousif held onto the promise of 2 Corinthians 4:8-9: "We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed." Your commitment to praying for your persecuted family bears fruit in wonderful stories like this. Thank you!

*representative image*

# CHURCH WITH NO HOME

## TOUR

**Join us for this in-person event to hear stories that will help you connect with your brothers and sisters who have sacrificed everything to follow Christ.**

### NOVA SCOTIA AND PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

#### **Friday, May 2 - 7:00pm**

Hebron Baptist Church  
21 Hillside Dr  
Hebron, NS B5A 5Z6

#### **Sunday, May 4 - 6:30pm**

Charlottetown Bible Chapel  
35 Lincolnwood Dr #34  
Charlottetown, PE C1A 6H4

#### **Monday, May 5 - 7:00pm**

Summerside Baptist Church  
219 Church St  
Summerside, PE C1N 1K3



More dates coming soon!  
Visit [www.persecutedchurch.ca](http://www.persecutedchurch.ca) or scan the QR code to see all upcoming events.





# JORINA WAS STRIPPED OF HER DIGNITY

NOW HELP HER  
CLOTHE OTHERS  
WITH STRENGTH

In Bangladesh, there's one powerful weapon of persecution against women: shame.

Jorina was stripped, humiliated and shamed for her faith. But still, she follows Jesus.

Now, Jorina needs your help to restore dignity and strength to persecuted women.

**Every \$60** could provide discipleship training to strengthen a woman facing persecution.

Visit [www.opendoorscanada.org](http://www.opendoorscanada.org) to give now, call (905) 636-0944 or scan the QR code below.



Thank you!

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