

Open Doors

MAGAZINE

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ARISE AFRICA STAND WITH THE CHURCH IN CRISIS



STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

www.opendoorscanada.org



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Cover image: The church in Sub-Saharan Africa is in crisis. Christians are being driven from their homes by violent persecution. But with your support, hope can arise. Read more on page 4.



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GARY'S TAKE



Pastor Gary Stagg
 Executive Director
 Open Doors Canada

Dear Friend,

Christian persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa is a deeply troubling issue. In many regions Christians face violence, discrimination, and displacement due to their faith. Extremist groups, political instability, and social tensions contribute to the hostile environment, making it dangerous for Christians to practice their faith openly. Churches are often targeted, and believers live in constant fear for their lives.

Despite these challenges, the Church is growing at a steady rate, and Christians continue to shine the light of Christ in these hostile environments. Believers feel the prayers and support from the world-wide body of Christ, and it gives them hope.

Hope provides the strength to endure hardships and the courage to continue following Jesus in the face of adversity. It fosters resilience and unity among persecuted communities, enabling them to support one another and stand firm in their faith. It is a powerful reminder to all of us that even in the darkest times, there is always a reason to believe in a better tomorrow.

As you read through these pages, may you be inspired by the stories of resilience and moved to pray for our persecuted family members. Take a moment to complete the enclosed Arise Africa petition and encourage others in your circle to sign as well. Thank you for doing your part to keep hope alive.

Grace & Peace,

Gary Stagg
 Pastor Gary Stagg



FROM ASHES, HOPE CAN ARISE



The church in Sub-Saharan Africa is in crisis. Christians are being driven from their homes by violent persecution. But with your support, hope can arise.

“One morning, they started burning everything. Setting fire to whatever they could find. In a single day, they turned everything to ash.”

Jemal’s* eyes fill with tears as he remembers...

One day. That’s all it took to destroy his home, his wood and metalwork business and the life he’d built over decades. Jemal watched as it went up in flames. His role as the family provider and protector ripped from him.

His livelihood extinguished.

“I lost all hope for the future. I gave up on everything. I even had thoughts of harming myself,” said Jemal.

“Mobs went house to house, singling out Christian homes,” said Jemal. “They did not want us to remain in town. Their goal was to eliminate Christianity.”

Worst of all, this shocking story is not confined to Ethiopia...

THE CHURCH IS BURNING

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, violent persecution is unprecedented. More than 16 million Christians have been forced from their homes and many are struggling to survive in sprawling displacement camps.

Women are being targeted with extreme sexual violence, resulting in trauma, shame and rejection. Men like Jemal, seen as protectors and breadwinners, are left helpless as militants destroy homes and businesses, thrusting families into poverty and homelessness.



Christians everywhere to stand alongside our brothers and sisters against violent persecution.

Already, up to 890,000 believers have been directly helped, thanks to you – but there’s more to do.

Our vision is to provide spiritual, emotional and practical support to four million Christians being persecuted for their faith, and we want to raise a million petitions and prayers to ensure violent persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa can no longer be ignored.

It’s urgent because, right now, believers like Jemal need our help.

‘GOD CAN RESTORE’

After their homes were burned to the ground, Jemal and other Christians walked to the next town and sought help from a church. For months, 30 families slept on the floor of a disused building. Then they took the brave decision to return to their old community – and start again.

“We endure many hardships to remain in our town,” said Jemal, pinching his eyes to keep the tears

from flowing. “We can’t restore what we lost. It is impossible. But God can do that.”

With your gift and prayers today, hope can arise – even from ashes. Your support can provide emergency relief, trauma care and help persecuted believers earn a living. By scaling up our response to meet the huge need, faith can be strengthened and people like

Jemal will know they are not alone.

“I still have hope in the Lord,” said Jemal. “Our God can do everything. We will work. We will change. That is my hope.”

*names changed for their protection



to the crisis facing the church in Sub-Saharan Africa, and leaders will take action to protect Christians.

PLEASE GIVE

Every \$48 could provide trauma care to a Christian who has faced extreme persecution.

Every \$75 could give food, shelter and clothing to four believers in Africa for a month.

Every \$110 could help a persecuted believer set up a business and give financial security.

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Jemal’s faith and courage, and ask God to strengthen him and his family.
- For the millions of Christians forced to flee their homes because of violent persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa. Pray for God’s justice and restoration.
- That the world will wake up

PLEASE SPEAK OUT

We aim to raise a million prayers and petitions as part of the Arise Africa campaign.

Please add your name to the petition at: www.opendoorscanada.org/ariseafrica

If you have already signed – thank you. Could you encourage someone else to sign today?

This is a crisis. The church is burning. It’s up to us to take action.

ARISE AFRICA

Back in 2023, in response to an invitation from church leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa, Open Doors launched the Arise Africa campaign. We’re calling on



As the church burns in Sub-Saharan Africa, there's one powerful way you can help today: **PRAY**

When Adam was violently kidnapped by Boko Haram fighters, near his home in Cameroon, there was only one thing he could do...

"In my heart, I prayed," he said.

And he didn't stop. Week after week in captivity Adam continued to call on the Lord. He even rallied other Christian men in the camp to join in. "We prayed continuously," he remembers. "I knew Jesus would perform a miracle, because we were there praying."

Then one day the guards fell asleep with the door open, and Adam fled to freedom. He swam across a river and walked through the bush until he was safe. "God did it, he spared me!" said Adam.

Now Adam – and other persecuted Christians across Sub-Saharan Africa – invite you to pray too. Please, will you join the struggle alongside your suffering family and stand with them in prayer?



PRAY FOR ADAM

Twice kidnapped by Boko Haram, Adam now supports other former captives.

- Pray for peace so Adam can return to his home.
- Ask God to use Adam to strengthen struggling believers.

Another powerful way you can help today: **SIGN THE PETITION**

Churches in Sub-Saharan Africa are calling upon the body of Christ around the world to stand with them, as one, to stop the violence and start the healing.

Our goal is to join them in raising one million voices to strengthen African Christians and bring the world's attention to the violence suffered by followers of Jesus in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Enclosed with this magazine is a petition that you can sign as an act of solidarity with the African Church.



Would you take it even one step further by sharing this petition with family and friends?

Mail back the petition to Open Doors Canada at:

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



For more information about this petition, and to sign it online, visit our website or scan the QR code. www.opendoorscanada.org/ariseafrica





COMFORTING THOSE WHO MOURN

Hakuri is all alone, caring for her 11 children, since her husband was murdered by extremists. Your support helps her survive.

Gunshots rang out around Hakuri's* village in Niger. She and her husband, at home with their three smallest children, scrambled to the floor for protection. Hearts racing. Terrified.

When extremists started burning buildings, the family had no choice but to break cover and run...

"That's when militants started shooting the men," Hakuri remembers.

The women and children took

shelter in a school, but extremists warned they would kill any male they discovered. Hakuri thought fast; she dressed her boys in girls' clothing. Then they fled.

"We saw the bodies of men who were killed, in the wilderness, and we walked on alone without our husbands, only our children." Later, Hakuri's worst fears were realised: her husband was among the dead.

After a long and perilous journey, Hakuri reached safety. But with no breadwinner and protector,

no money and no home, she's intensely vulnerable. Her older eight children returned from boarding school, as Hakuri couldn't pay the fees. Now, the family barely has enough to eat.

"Our life is so difficult," says Hakuri. "We have to buy firewood, water, food – but I have no husband. So where can we go to find help?"

Thankfully, you are standing with this vulnerable family – and your generous support helps Hakuri survive.

START THE HEALING

"My pastor called and said you sent money to buy a bag of rice, oil and other food for my children," said Hakuri. She also received support with housing. And, thanks to you, Hakuri now has access to vital trauma healing.

"Before I received counselling, I didn't sleep," said Hakuri. "I grieved for my husband day and night. But now I see changes in my life. I don't worry so much. I have learnt that if I remain in bitterness, my children will not have peace."

Hakuri added, "I am paying the price of following Jesus. But I will never say God has rejected me."

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 16 million Christians like Hakuri have been forced from their

homes by unprecedented violent persecution. In Niger, the largest country in West Africa, Islamic extremists are gaining territory. The church in the region is in crisis – but your gifts and prayers are making a vital difference.

"We need peace," says Hakuri. "Pray that God will make our faith in Christ strong, in order to endure persecution."

*name changed to protect the family



PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for Hakuri and her children, for safety, security and good health. Ask God to fill them with courage and strength.
- Pray for wisdom and love within church leaders in Niger, as they minister to persecuted, broken communities.
- Pray for the militants who are persecuting Christians. Ask God to turn their hearts away from violence, and pray they will encounter Jesus' love.

'GLIMMERS OF HOPE'



As the Arise Africa campaign enters its third year, we look back at what your amazing support has achieved so far.

Pastor Barnabas is clear: you are the reason he is here today.

Since he and his family were driven from their home, in northern Nigeria, by violent persecution, Pastor Barnabas has been struggling to survive in a displacement camp. Thanks to you, he's among 124,000 families who received relief aid, including food, medical care and shelter last year. "I want to use this opportunity to

say thank you," he said. "If not for the help of your ministry, I don't think it would be easy for us to live. They cared for us as a mother, as fathers and sisters. Many people were dying, sick, no food. They made provision. They took us along as brothers and sisters."

In 2024, more than 545,000 Christians like Pastor Barnabas received vital help because of your gifts and prayers. You provided

trauma care, education and training, as well as emergency aid. You stood alongside the church in Sub-Saharan Africa, and highlighted an issue no one was talking about.

SHINING A LIGHT

More than 14,000 schools in Sub-Saharan Africa have closed because of violence – but last year, you helped 3,000 children return to school, by paying fees and buying uniforms. More than 700 young people in Mali and Nigeria received training to help them find work.

You also shone a light on the crisis facing the church. Nearly 100 people from African churches, Christian organisations and national governments attended an Open Doors conference in Kenya in November, to discuss pressures on Freedom of Religious Belief. Now, we're seeing leaders start to proactively respond to the challenges of persecution.

One lawyer, Ibrahim*, set up a Christian Lawyers Fellowship in his country following the conference. "It has been a real success," he said. "Previously I was the only lawyer standing up for the persecuted church. Now we are more, and are getting better results."

Meanwhile, a report about displaced Christians in Nigeria,

called No Road Home, caught the attention of politicians in the European Union and United Nations. In the UK alone, the report was distributed to 150 MPs.

THANK YOU

"We see glimmers of hope," said the Arise Africa leadership committee, in a statement. "Because of the Arise Africa campaign, millions of Christians responded generously in prayer and giving. Thank you for joining hands with us to make the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Africa a priority in the hearts and minds of the global church."

*name changed for security reasons

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for the coming year as we aim to reach every family directly affected by violent persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Pray we'll see the global church awakened, united, praying and speaking out about the crisis facing the church.
- Pray that governments and leaders acknowledge and take action to tackle violence against Christians in the region.

GOOD NEWS

YOUR SUPPORT HELPED CENTRAL ASIAN CHURCHES DISCIPLE AND BAPTIZE DEAF CHRISTIANS



The baptisms had to be carried out in secret, as this church was not formally registered and therefore not allowed to practice baptisms.

One Open Doors partner ministry in Central Asia focuses on outreach to deaf Christians. These believers are already at a physical disadvantage, and following Jesus means they experience religious persecution as well. One church was able to organize ongoing seminars for new Christians to learn about the life and times of Jesus. This information not only helps disciple new believers, but it communicates information specifically to the deaf community, allowing them the dignity of formal learning. Recently, following these seminars, six individuals took the step of baptism! Praise God for his faithful children in Central Asia.

BECAUSE OF YOU, THESE CHRISTIANS CAN READ THE BIBLE IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE



The Sura' Madatu is reviving identity, empowering faith, and ensuring that future Toraja generations can approach God's word without feeling like outsiders!

In Tana Toraja, Indonesia, the locals speak Toraja. Toraja language is now at level 4 on a 10-point scale, where level 10 signifies total extinction. One church leader said: "We're worried this language may eventually disappear. That's why we still hold services in Toraja." Longing to preserve their mother tongue, thousands of Torajan Christians have embraced the arrival of 3,000 Toraja-language Bibles that could be produced thanks to your generosity! The Bibles are called *Sura' Madatu*, or *Holy Book*. The phrase represents not just translation, but God's Word contextualized in a people's heart language.

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.

ONTARIO

Wednesday, September 17
7:00pm

Calvary Community Church
Tilbury, ON

Saturday, October 18
7:00pm

Pinelands Baptist Church
Burlington, ON

Monday, October 20
7:00pm

Mapleview Church
Barrie, ON
Young adults (18-29) only

Sunday, October 26
7:00pm

Kingsway Church
Hagersville, ON

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Monday, October 6
7:00pm

Crossroads Community Church
Merritt, BC

Thursday, October 9
7:00pm

Bethel Church Penticton
Penticton, BC

Friday, October 10
7:00pm

Central Presbyterian Church
Vancouver, BC

Sunday services in Ontario and Quebec. Visit website for dates and locations.



More dates coming soon!

Visit www.persecutedchurch.ca or scan the QR code to see all upcoming events.

THE CHURCH IS BURNING

CRISIS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



"Their goal was to eliminate Christianity."

Jemal, Ethiopia

Fire crackled and sparks flew. Everything Jemal* had worked for was in flames. Destroyed in less than an hour.

Jemal and 375 other Christian families were made homeless the night persecutors burned their homes and businesses to the ground, in Ethiopia.

No one came to help.

A crisis is unfolding in Sub-Saharan Africa. The church is burning.

We cannot stand by while Christianity is extinguished.

**STOP THE VIOLENCE
START THE HEALING**

EVERY \$75 could give food, shelter and clothing to four believers in Africa for a month.

You can stand against violent persecution alongside the church in Sub-Saharan Africa. Provide emergency aid, trauma care and livelihood support with a gift today. Raise awareness by signing and sharing the Arise Africa petition.

Go to www.opendoorscanada.org to give today.

**name changed to protect his identity*

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