

# Open Doors

MAGAZINE

JULY | AUGUST 2024

**INSIDE: KHADA'S  
DANGEROUS SECRET**

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

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



# CONTENTS

Khada's Dangerous Secret	4
Sustained by your Prayers	8
IMPACT: 'Never abandoned, because of you'	10
IMPACT: Starting afresh, thanks to you	12
Because of You...	14

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: Right now, it has never been more dangerous to follow Jesus in Afghanistan. The country has been among the top 10 most dangerous places for Christians for a decade (according to the Open Doors World Watch List). Since the Taliban seized control in summer 2021, things have become worse. Read more on page 4.*

OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE is published 6 times a year to provide concerned Christians with information about events affecting persecuted Christians worldwide. ODC is a member of Canadian Centre for Christian Charities and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. The material contained in this publication cannot be reproduced in any form, including on the internet, without written permission. © 2024 Open Doors Canada.

# GARY'S TAKE

Dear Friend,

The Bible has often been called "The Most Dangerous Book in the World." For us, it is hard to fathom how a book that is so lifegiving could be described that way. It is our guide for living a life marked by the freedom we have received in Christ. Whether we are reading it in the comfort of our own home or the rubble of a burnt-out church, the Bible meets us where we are.

Yet, the thing that makes the Bible lifegiving to us, makes it off-putting to others because it confronts them with their sinful nature, their need of salvation, and the assertion that Jesus is the only way to eternal life. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

In this issue, we share the story of Khada who knew only too well the danger of the book gifted to her by a friend at work. Thankfully, that Bible led her and her husband to choose the path of Christ, but they knew it came with a high cost. Khada lives now as secret believer because her life will be in danger if her faith is discovered.

Khada's story is not unique. Today, untold thousands of believers live in secret to protect their lives and the lives of their children. But because of your prayers and support, they know they are not alone, and incredibly, the underground church is growing. Thank you for all you do to strengthen those who share our faith but not our freedom.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg  
 Executive Director





# KHADA'S DANGEROUS SECRET

Secret believers like Khada, in Afghanistan, risk everything to follow Jesus. They rely on your support to survive.

**Khada\*, in Afghanistan, carries a secret that could get her killed. But she's trusting you with it today – because she needs your support.**

The book was handed over silently, with no introduction, by Khada's close friend at work. Khada slipped it into her bag and took it home to show her husband...

It was a Bible.

Even just holding it in their hands put this couple in extreme danger. Like almost everyone in Afghanistan, Khada and Ehsan\* were strict Muslims. But curious, they began to read – and what they discovered changed their lives.

"We had questions, which we solved together, and my husband told me he would follow whatever path I took," said Khada. "We chose the path of Christ."

The decision came with the highest cost you could imagine.

## THREE TALIBAN YEARS

Right now, it has never been more dangerous to follow Jesus in Afghanistan. The country has been among the top 10 most dangerous places for Christians for a decade (according to the Open Doors World Watch List).

Since the Taliban seized control in summer 2021, things have become worse.

The reality is, if you leave Islam and you are found out, you will be killed. Many Christians have fled and remaining believers have gone into hiding. If discovered, they face arrest, torture and even death.

No one has any real idea how many Christians are in Afghanistan. But our partner in the country says, incredibly, the church appears to be growing.

"The people of Afghanistan are thirsty for love because, for decades, they have experienced war and misery," he said. "When they hear about the love of Jesus for them, it's different to the Taliban. They join Christianity."

**"BY THIS EVERYONE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER."**

JOHN 13:35

Secrecy is vital. Our partner added, "Jesus Christ motivates believers to operate covertly, spreading the good news among fellow Afghans. They keep faith alive by reading the Word every day and meeting together when it's safe."



with Christ,” said Khada. “I stopped crying, read Ephesians 6 and vowed to serve Jesus.”

She added, “I used to talk with Ehsan every day. Now that he is gone, I talk to God every night. I believe He listens and hears all my prayers.”

the world. We cannot abandon Christians risking everything for their faith.

“When we chose the path of Christ, we knew it had difficulties,” said Khada. “In the Taliban regime we face challenges. But with strong faith, we persevere. With hope, we continue this journey. I continue to be a servant of Christ.”

\*We’ve changed their names and used re-enactment images because of the extreme danger involved in sharing this story



## Will you support secret believers like Khada?

### PLEASE PRAY

- That Khada will know the Lord’s peace and comfort as she grieves the loss of Ehsan.
- For protection over Khada and all Afghan Christians as they bravely follow Jesus today.
- For secret believers everywhere, that God will fill them with strength and courage.

### PLEASE GIVE

**Every \$34** could give Bibles to five secret believers, so they can meet God in his Word.

**Every \$75** could help a secret believer establish a livelihood, giving long-term financial security.

**Every \$115** could help 10 secret believers stay strong in faith through discipleship training.

### UNBEARABLE COST

But no matter how careful you are, the danger is always there. As Khada will tell you...

Khada and Ehsan had been baptized and were connected to a group of secret believers. One day, after visiting a Bible study group, Ehsan did not return home. Khada called him again and again, but there was no answer. Night fell, and a chilling fear gripped Khada.

Two days later, her beloved husband’s body was discovered. He’d been tortured and killed. Khada was overcome with grief and pain – but the words of Scripture saved her.

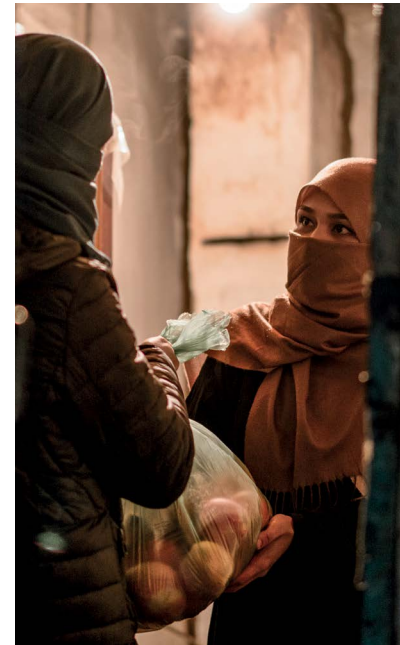
“My friend, the one who gave me the Bible, told me Ehsan was now

### NOT ALONE

Now, Khada carries her dangerous secret, concealing her faith day in, day out. She supports other Afghan Christians and is raising her children to follow Jesus. But she can’t do it alone.

As a widow, with no agency to find employment, Khada can’t survive without practical support. As a secret believer, she depends on the love and prayers of the global church to keep her faith strong. It’s up to us to help our isolated brothers and sisters.

Your gifts and prayers can provide Bibles, discipleship training and run vital livelihood projects so people like Khada can earn money, in Afghanistan and around



You can provide practical aid to secret believers like Khada.

# SUSTAINED BY YOUR PRAYERS

Every minute you spend in prayer for secret believers matters. Please pray for courageous Christians, Elmahdi\* in Morocco and Hila\* in Afghanistan...

**NAME**  
**ELMAHDI**

**STATUS**  
**DIVORCEE, BARRED FROM SEEING CHILDREN, SECRET BELIEVER**

**COUNTRY**  
**MOROCCO**  
**#24 IN THE WORLD WATCH LIST**

As a young man, Elmahdi\* was intrigued by the extraordinary life of Christ. His quest for truth led him to explore Christianity online, and Elmahdi was drawn to faith and baptised. But what would his wife, a strict Muslim, think? Fearing the worst, Elmahdi kept his new faith secret...

But Elmahdi couldn't keep making up excuses to attend church. His wife became suspicious, searched her husband's phone – and discovered his conversion. She presented him with an ultimatum: revert to Islam, or divorce.



It was a desperate choice, but Elmahdi couldn't turn his back on Jesus. Today, he's divorced. He hasn't seen his beloved children since 2022. And in his hardest moments, he's tormented by thoughts of reverting to Islam to be reunited with his son and two daughters.

#### **PRAY**

- Please pray urgently that Elmahdi will remain strong in his faith.
- Ask God to reunite Elmahdi and his children, just as He did for Sarah\* (see page 12).
- Pray for comfort and peace for Elmahdi in his darkest days.



**NAME**  
**HILA**

**STATUS**  
**WIDOW, SINGLE PARENT, EDUCATED, SECRET BELIEVER**

**COUNTRY**  
**AFGHANISTAN**  
**#10 IN THE WORLD WATCH LIST**

Hila's\* childhood was unusual. Her parents allowed her to go to school, even though most girls stayed at home. Hila was clever – and even after marrying at the age of 18, she carried on studying at university.

But things changed in Hila's second year at uni. "My husband introduced me to the Bible after watching a TV program," she said. "We delved into the Bible, finding guidance and inspiration."

The couple gave their lives to Jesus, and even found other Christians to walk with. But one day Hila's husband went to another village to buy Bible study books – and never returned.

"He was sacrificed in the way of Christ," said Hila. Now, this mother-of-two gets by with help from her community – but she needs your prayers.

#### **PRAY**

- Lift up Hila to the Lord and ask God to bless, strengthen and comfort her.
- Pray for God's protection over Hila and her children as they follow Jesus secretly.
- Pray boldly that Afghanistan will be freed from oppressive forces.

# 'NEVER ABANDONED, BECAUSE OF YOU'

The discovery of a hidden Bible put young Egyptian couple Raef and Sawson in extreme danger. Your gifts and prayers saved them.



Raef and Sawson were rejected and alone – until your caring support gave them a fresh start. Image is illustrative

*"You are infidels. You have deceived me. You should both be killed!"*

Raef\* and his wife Sawson\* cowered at the terrible threats. Raef's father, an imam in his Egyptian village and a fanatical Muslim, was seething with furious

rage. He'd entered the couple's room while they were away, and discovered their secret Bible. Now he was confronting them in the most brutal way...

"If you stay in the village any longer, you will be harmed!" screamed Raef's father.

## A THREE-YEAR SECRET

Raef and Sawson lived with Raef's parents, and Raef drove a taxi that belonged to his father. They had come to faith in Jesus about three years earlier, after Sawson's brother converted to Christianity and shared his story with them.

The couple were part of a home church and were learning to walk with Jesus. "We were on a journey of growth and transformation," remembers Raef, "beginning to understand the significance of an intimate relationship with Christ."

But, that day, with their faith exposed and the father's cruel threats echoing in their ears, Raef and Sawson packed up a handful of belongings – and left. The couple had no home, no job, and no hope. They even questioned their decision to follow Jesus.

## 'SAVED, THANKS TO YOU'

That was when the pair met an Open Doors local partner – and your support changed everything.

"We were saved thanks to the support you extended to us in every aspect," says Raef. "You helped us find a place to stay and even provided the means for me to buy a vehicle, so I could regain an income and provide for my family.

"Not only that, you offered

psychological support through counselling and nurtured our spiritual growth through a discipleship group. We discovered a secure and nurturing community to accompany us on our journey."

## 'WITH YOU ALWAYS'

Today, Raef and Sawson continue to live a double identity; believers at home and Muslims in public. In Egypt, conversion from Islam means ongoing danger and persecution. If the couple's faith was discovered publicly, they would face discrimination, violence, harassment and more threats.

But with your support, they persevere – holding firmly to Jesus words in Matthew 28:20: "I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

*\*Names changed to maintain secrecy*

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray that Raef and Sawson will grow in faith, guided and empowered by God to face their daily struggles.
- Ask the Lord to bring strength and clarity to the couple's words and actions, as they live their dual identity.
- Pray for secret believers around the world, that they would know their global family cares and is praying.

WWL  
38

# STARTING AFRESH, THANKS TO YOU

**When Sarah's husband discovered her secret faith, his anger and violence almost destroyed her. Today, thanks to you, Sarah has rebuilt her life.**



Your kindness means Sarah, a secret believer in Egypt, has a home, a church family, and hope for the future.

*Eyes closed, Bible in hand, Sarah\* was praying alone at home in Egypt when she heard footsteps...*

It spelled danger. For a year, Sarah had been secretly following Jesus. A friend at work had shared the gospel and Sarah, unhappy in an abusive marriage, was drawn to the hope and peace of Christianity.

Sarah turned her back on Islam – but it came at a cost. “If my husband found out about my faith, I would be exposed to rejection, persecution and even divorce. I had to be wise and cautious.”

So as the footsteps closed in, Sarah froze in fear.

## ABUSED AND ABANDONED

It was her husband, Rashed,\* back early from work.

Rashed stepped into the room, saw Sarah with the Bible, and exploded into a rage. He beat Sarah so violently she ended up in hospital. While she was being treated, Rashed left home with their two children.

Sarah was broken. “I felt fear... fear of people who consider Christians as infidels, fear that I wouldn't see my children again, fear because I'm vulnerable,” she said. With her secret faith exposed, Sarah had no choice but to resign from her job and flee the area.

That's when your kindness reached Sarah and helped her start again.

## SAFE AND STABLE

The friend who first shared the gospel with Sarah introduced her to an Open Doors partner, called Shereen\*. Thanks to you, Shereen was able to find a house church and a home for Sarah, cover her rent and help her find a job. “Your support made me feel safe and stable,” she said.

Then, last year, the final piece of the puzzle fell into place... Sarah received a phone call from her oldest son, now aged 15. “We've been searching for you for years,

Mom,” he said.

With tears in her eyes, Sarah remembers their happy reunion. “There are no words to express the joy I felt,” she smiles. “There are no limits to the love, mercy and grace of the Lord.”

Today, Sarah keeps her faith secret for her own protection. Her conversion means she remains a target for extremists. So outwardly, Sarah lives as a Muslim, but in her heart she follows Jesus – and your support keeps her faith strong.

“I know God will never abandon me,” Sarah said, with certainty. “I have come to understand that God is always here.”

*\*Names changed and re-enactment images used to maintain secrecy*

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for the Lord's protection over Sarah and her two sons, as they live, worship and serve.
- Pray that God will reveal himself to other Muslims in Egypt who are searching for love and peace.
- Pray that Egypt's secret believers will powerfully reflect the love of Jesus in their lives and actions.

WWL  
38

# BECAUSE OF YOU...

## BECAUSE OF YOU, CENTRAL ASIAN CHRISTIANS HAVE ACCESS TO CHRISTIAN MEDIA



*This Central Asian Christian is able to watch Christian media productions offline thanks to the SD cards made possible by supporters like you.*

For many Christians in remote areas of Central Asia, opportunities to access Christian materials are limited. Written resources are only accessible to those who are literate, and because the internet is either unavailable or too expensive, it prevents access to the myriad of online materials that might otherwise be valuable. Thanks to your support, Open Doors partners were able to create SD cards with offline media resources accessible to everyone. This available media includes films, audiobooks, songs, and more. For the growing Christian population in Central Asia, these resources are very helpful in everyday discipleship and study.

## THANKS TO YOU, HAWA HAS PEACE IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION



*Hawa stands with her fabrics and a fridge that she uses to sell water. She says, "Thank you for the support and prayers. Now I have peace of mind."*

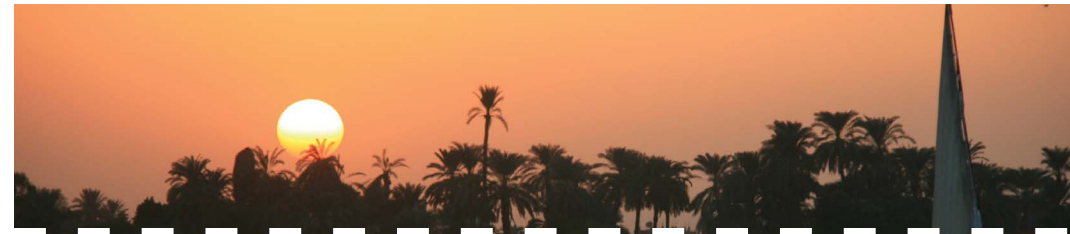
Hawa\* lives in Mali and converted to Christianity from Islam. As a result of her decision, her family completely cut her off, including taking her three children from her. The pressure she endured from them meant she had to move away and rebuild her life. Open Doors partners came alongside Hawa with financial support. Because of your generosity, Hawa paid a full year's rent, bought medication, food and some fabrics to continue her business selling clothes. Hawa says "Today I know that I have true brothers and sisters who are standing with me in the time of persecution."



On April 30, 2024, Open Doors Canada had the opportunity to travel to Ottawa for our 2024 World Watch List Special Presentation.

This is an event we anticipate eagerly every year, and we were so grateful for all the supporters who took time to invite their Members of Parliament to join us.

We had over 20 attendees and nearly a dozen MPs in attendance or represented. We are so grateful to all parliamentarians and their assistants who made time in their very busy schedules to come out and hear the latest World Watch research and hear stories of believers experiencing persecution and discrimination because of their faith in Jesus.



## TRAVEL WITH US IN 2025

Open Doors Canada offers a few trips every year to visit with the persecuted church. If you are interested in more information, email: [travel@odcan.org](mailto:travel@odcan.org).



# **KHADA'S SECRET COULD COST HER LIFE. SHE'S TRUSTING YOU WITH IT...**

**Khada\*, in Afghanistan, carries a dangerous secret.**

A secret that has already cost her beloved husband's life. A secret that could get her killed, too. After all, if you leave Islam and you are found out, you will suffer.

*"I chose the path of Christ," says Khada.*

**Today, Khada is trusting you with her secret because she needs your help.**

She needs support to survive. She needs prayer. She needs to know she's not alone.

Today, you can strengthen secret believers in Afghanistan and

around the world by giving Bibles, discipleship training and practical help.

Will you support secret believers like Khada?

**EVERY \$75** could help a secret believer establish a livelihood, giving long-term financial security.

Visit [www.opendoorscanada.org](http://www.opendoorscanada.org) to give your gift now, or phone (905) 636-0944. Thank you.

*\*We've changed her name and used a re-enactment image to protect her identity*

*Thank you*

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)

**OpenDoors®**



/OpenDoorsCanada