

# OpenDoors

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2024

## JOY AT CHRISTMAS

DEFYING  
PERSECUTION TO  
CELEBRATE

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)



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*Cover image: For children who, every day, endure rejection because of their faith, Christmas is a rare moment of joy and friendship. It's an opportunity we cannot let them miss. 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,

Persecution takes on many forms for children. Some are targeted simply because they were born into a Christian family. Others suffer persecution as they develop their own faith or as their parents convert to Christianity. Here are some of the ways children experience persecution around the world:

- **Persecution Through Education.** The mistreatment and bullying they experience from their teachers and peers mean that many of them hide their faith and have trouble mingling with other children. They also lose interest in their studies and become withdrawn.
- **Separation From Christian Parents.** Families are sometimes separated as parents are imprisoned or because the child or parent has been abducted, pushed into forced recruitment, or forced to flee for their safety. Most commonly, separation happens when a parent converts to Christianity.
- **Sexual Violence and Grooming.** Christian girls especially become victims of sexual violence or grooming. This ensures her life pathway will be impacted due to the resulting shame, isolation, and severely restricted opportunities to marry.
- **Gang Recruitment and Violence.** Children of parents involved in church activities in gang territories are targeted for forced recruitment or sexual assault by gangs as a means of punishment.

The pressure on children in the persecuted church is intense, especially among children in converted families, taking a toll on their physical and emotional health. They need to know they are not alone. That's why it is so important for us to pray and support them not only at Christmas, but throughout the year.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg  
 Executive Director





# ALONE

## BECAUSE OF HER FAITH

Nine-year-old Rumana walks to school alone, in Bangladesh, and when she gets to school, she's isolated and alone. You can give joy to persecuted children like her this Christmas.

**Christmas offers a rare moment of joy for children from Bangladesh who are bullied and isolated because of their faith. Your support can help ensure they don't spend Christmas alone.**

Nine-year-old Rumana sits alone in an empty classroom, in a school in north-west Bangladesh.

The sound of other children having fun drifts through the window. But Rumana is not welcome among them. Instead, she opens her notepad and spends breaktime playing her own made-up game.

"I don't have any friends because I'm a Christian," says Rumana, sadly. Every day, she's mocked and left out. Once, she was pushed down the stairs. "Parents and teachers tell the other children, 'Don't mingle with the Christian'."

Rumana is brave – but the relentless cruelty takes its toll. "When they say something, I keep smiling so they won't know I'm hurt," says Rumana. "But when I'm alone, when they can't see, I cry."

In a nearby village Moryom, the nine-year-old daughter of a church pastor, knows the same painful rejection. She walks to school

alone because local rickshaw drivers refuse to take her. In the classroom, teachers turn a blind eye when Moryom is bullied.

"My classmates mock me, calling me 'Christian', and sometimes they throw bricks at me," says Moryom. "They say they will only play with me if I come back to Islam."

### PICTURE OF PERSECUTION

This is the heartbreaking picture of persecution among children.

While adult believers make a conscious decision to accept the cost of following Jesus, children don't. They are among the most vulnerable of all persecuted Christians, and the trauma they experience can have a lifelong impact.

Rumana will never forget the day she returned from school to find her home ablaze, smoke billowing from the roof. "No one from our village offered any help," she recalls. "All of them were just watching. We were utterly helpless."

In Bangladesh, where 90% of people are Muslim and the honour-based culture dominates, anyone supporting this Christian family could become a target too. So with most of their possessions lost to the fire, and nowhere to go, Rumana's family built a shed in their yard and started living there.



“I don’t have any friends because I’m a Christian,” says Rumana. Children who follow Jesus are bullied and isolated because of their faith.

But despite everything, children like Rumana and Moryom keep following Jesus...

### RESILIENT FAITH

“My mother told me people will always mistreat me but I should follow the Lord, and keep His words in my heart. She said it’s ok to be alone,” said Rumana. “I told God everything, so I feel better.”

**“IT’S ONLY BECAUSE OF JESUS’ LOVE THAT I HAVE SURVIVED.”** ✨

Rumana’s remarkable faith means she even forgives the children who hurt her. “Why should I be angry at them? I forgive them. I pray to God every day for them,” she says simply.

This resilience is inspiring – but without support, children like Rumana and Moryom are at risk. If young people are alone, isolated, and disconnected from the body of Christ, how can they withstand the pressures they face daily? The very future of the church is in danger.

### CHRISTMAS JOY

Open Doors has a vision to provide shelter, trauma counselling and relief to persecuted children around the world, as well as education so children have hope and a future. But above all, we believe children should not be alone – especially at Christmas.

“I love to celebrate Christmas,” exclaims Rumana, eyes shining. Moryom adds, “All our church gathers and we have lots of fun, singing, dancing, praying and reading Scriptures. We have new dresses, cut a cake and eat it.”

For children who, every day, endure rejection because of their faith, Christmas is a rare moment of joy and friendship. It’s an opportunity we cannot let them miss.

Your support today can bring persecuted children together to celebrate Jesus’ birth in a safe place. With your gifts and prayers, children like Rumana and Moryom can forget the loneliness and persecution for one day – and experience joy.

“It’s only because of Jesus’ love that I have survived until now, despite all the persecution,” says Rumana. “His love has guided me this far, and I know I am on the right path.”



Give joy to children like Moryom at Christmas.

## Will you give the gift of joy to a persecuted child this Christmas?

### PLEASE GIVE

- ✨ **Every \$35** could give Bibles to 10 children, to help nurture their faith.
- ✨ **Every \$62** could give joy to an isolated child by bringing them a special Christmas gathering.
- ✨ **Every \$109** could provide immediate aid to persecuted Christians, including medicine, essentials and shelter.

### PLEASE PRAY

- Ask God to protect Rumana and Moryom from cruelty, especially as they walk to and from school, and to put caring friends in their lives.
- For persecuted children around the world, particularly at Christmas, that they will know they are not alone.

# Christmas joy, thanks to you

For Rumana and Moryom, Christmas is when they're not alone.

Your generous support means that, for one special day, the girls can forget the cruel taunts, rejection and isolation of life in Muslim-majority Bangladesh and gather with other believers to sing, dance and celebrate. It's a moment of respite amid relentless persecution. A day to be a child again.

Thank you for giving the gift of joy to  
persecuted children like these.



"It's a lot of fun to celebrate Jesus' birth by cutting a cake and eating it." - Moryom



**"I love celebrating Christmas because all Christians gather together. We sing songs and read from the Bible, cut a cake and have a fellowship meal."**

Rumana, aged nine, Bangladesh



Your gifts and prayers bring joy to persecuted children like these at Christmas.



# 'THE WHOLE WORLD CELEBRATES'



As a persecuted believer and the daughter of deaf parents, life is tough for teenager Ailin\*. But, thanks to your support, Christmas is a time of joy.

Sitting around the festive table with her parents and brothers, in their home in Central Asia, Ailin\* is truly happy. Christmas is the one time when this family has a reason to celebrate...

"We remember the birth of Jesus Christ with our family," says Ailin. "We cook and play games. I really

like this holiday because the whole world celebrates and it's a lot of fun."

It's heart-warming to see Ailin's joy at Christmas – because, for the rest of the year, her life is unbearably difficult. Both Ailin's parents are deaf, which is viewed by their Muslim-majority community as a

curse from Allah. And the family follow Jesus, so persecution is intense.

## YOUNG, PERSECUTED AND ALONE

From a young age, Ailin went to church with her parents. As a teenager, her own faith developed. But it left her alone and isolated.

"As I got to know Jesus Christ, I became intentional about going to church. But my relatives started to prevent me," remembers Ailin. "When I attended church and prayed, they forbade me. They started to force me to renounce my faith."

## "I REMEMBERED GOD'S PROMISE IN ISAIAH 41:10"

Ailin had no one to defend her. "Because my parents are deaf, they can't answer or say anything," explained Ailin. "Relatives told me I had to be a Muslim because our whole clan are Muslim. They said, 'Your parents can't hear, so they can't explain this to you.'"

One day, Ailin woke to a 6:30am knock on the front door. "When I came out, I was shocked. More than 15 policemen came. It was just me, my mom and my brothers at home. I asked if I could call someone, like

our pastor. They said no."

The police found a Christian book in the home, and Ailin and her mom were dragged to the police station. "I remembered God's promise in Isaiah 41:10 and found strength to face the interrogation," said Ailin.

## 'A STRONG BELIEVER'

Miraculously, Ailin and her mom were released without charge. Today, your gifts and prayers are strengthening the faith of this brave teenage girl, and your support is bringing joy this Christmas.

"I've never experienced the kind of love that Open Doors partners have given to me," said Ailin. "I tell them what moves me, and we pray together. I have learned about Jesus. I can say I'm becoming a strong believer because of Open Doors."

*\*name changed and country name withheld because of the risk to this teenager*

## PLEASE PRAY

- Pray this Christmas will be a time of joy, fellowship and renewal for Ailin and her family.
- Ask God to give strength to Ailin, as she cares for her deaf parents and endures the cruelty of her community.
- Pray for other persecuted young believers, that they will know they are not alone.

# YOUR PRAYERS ARE THEIR JOY

Persecuted children face danger, abuse and rejection every day, but your prayers mean they are never alone.

**NAME**  
**SEPIDEH\***

**AGE**  
**13**

**COUNTRY**  
**IRAN**

**STATUS**  
**BECAME A CHRISTIAN**  
**ALONGSIDE HER MOM**  
**THREE YEARS AGO**



Thirteen-year-old Sepideh\* faces an uncertain future.

Since she and her mom found faith in Jesus, Sepideh's father has become violent and abusive. Recently, he locked them out of the family home and filed for divorce.

"Sometimes I wonder why my father changed," Sepideh ponders. "Why doesn't he love me anymore? Just because I decided to love Jesus?"

Life for Sepideh's mom, as a single woman, will be difficult at best. But she and Sepideh were recently

baptized when they secretly attended a Christian conference in another country – and now their hope is in Jesus.

## PRAY

- Pray Sepideh will have peace in this time of uncertainty, trusting in God's faithfulness.
- Ask God to provide Sepideh and her mom with a supportive Christian community to love and encourage them.
- Sepideh and her mom attend online meetings hosted by Open Doors. Pray the pair will continue to grow in faith through discipleship training.

**NAME**  
**ASHAMONI**

**AGE**  
**12**

**COUNTRY**  
**BANGLADESH**

**STATUS**  
**PARENTS CONVERTED TO**  
**CHRISTIANITY BEFORE**  
**ASHAMONI WAS BORN**



Persecution begins for Ashamoni the minute she leaves home.

She walks to school alone while rickshaws drive by, full of her classmates. The Muslim drivers never pick her up. "At school, children do not sit with me because I am dirty to them," says Ashamoni. "They snatch my books and bag and, when I ask for my things back, they mock me."

Even the teachers are complicit. "If I get the highest marks on an exam paper, they change it," says

Ashamoni. Only your prayers can help this young girl keep standing strong for Jesus.

## PRAY

- Give thanks that your support is reaching Ashamoni's family with food, financial support and essentials, so they can survive.
- Pray for Ashamoni, that she will have strength to persevere in school and keep following Jesus.
- Ask God to give Ashamoni a future of hope, purpose and opportunity.

# BECAUSE OF YOU...

## YOUR GENEROSITY HAS PROVIDED AID TO BELIEVERS IN MALI



*"I can't even describe my joy!" said Pastor Thomas who is a local church leader. "Our Christian brothers came to support us with rice, oil and money. More than 300 people were supported. Sincerely I thank God and our brothers who came to support us."*

Mali has endured years of terrorist attacks from jihadist groups, mainly in the northern and central regions of the country, which has had a damaging impact on Christian communities. Thanks to your support, Open Doors partners were able to provide 320 Christian families with vital relief aid this past June. The package consisted of 100kg of rice, 5 litres of oil and some financial support so families can address other needs like clothes, school fees or buy medicine. The relief was much appreciated.

## BECAUSE OF YOU, MALAYSIAN YOUTH GATHER FOR FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY THE WORD OF GOD



*"[These gatherings] have opened my eyes to the beauty of diversity within our faith community. It reinforced my belief in the power of coming together as one, united in God's love."*

Many young believers in Malaysia leave their faith when they move to big cities for higher education. Seeing that the problem is the lack of a Christ-centred community, local partners formed a small community of young believers to gather on a weekly basis to worship, fellowship and study the Word of God.

Through your support, local partners assist this community with transportation, hall rentals for their gatherings, and some miscellaneous costs for each week's program.

# NORTH KOREA NEVER ABANDONED 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.

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



## BRITISH COLUMBIA

### Wednesday, Nov 6 - 6:30pm

Departure Bay Baptist Church  
3510 Departure Bay Rd  
Nanaimo, BC V9T 1C1

### Friday, Nov 8 - 6:30pm

Bethel Baptist Church  
5717 Mermaid St  
Sechelt, BC V7Z 1A0

### Sunday, Nov 10 - 10:00am

Westlynn Baptist Church  
1341 27th St  
North Vancouver, BC V7J 1S6

### Sunday, Nov 10 - 7:00pm

Elim Gospel Chapel  
566 5th St  
Courtenay, BC V9N 1K3

## NOVA SCOTIA AND NEW BRUNSWICK

### Saturday, Nov 9 - 7:00pm

Birch Cove Baptist Church  
50 Donaldson Ave  
Halifax, NS B3M 3B5

### Sunday, Nov 10 - 10:30am

Life Branch Church  
10 Lancaster Dr  
Dartmouth, NS B3A 4Y9

### Sunday, Nov 10 - 7:00pm

Healing Streams Int'l Church  
291 Pictou Rd  
Truro, NS B2N 2S7

### Tuesday, Nov 12 - 7:00pm

Glad Tidings Moncton  
2460 Mountain Rd  
Moncton, NB E1G 1B4





# No child should be alone at Christmas

**Give the gift of joy to a child like Rumana, who's isolated and bullied for her faith.**

"I don't have any friends in school because I'm a Christian."

Nine-year-old Rumana is mocked, abused and excluded because of her faith. She puts on a brave face in class, but on her own, she cries.

Only with your support can Rumana endure the bullying and keep following Jesus.

Will you give the gift of joy to isolated and vulnerable children this Christmas?

**Every \$62** could give joy to an isolated child by bringing them to a special Christmas celebration with other believers.

Go to [opendoorscanada.org](https://opendoorscanada.org) to give now (or scan the QR code) or phone us at (905) 636-0944.



Thank you.

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