

# Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | May/June 2020



**“God is our  
refuge and  
strength, an  
ever-present  
help in trouble.  
Therefore we  
will not fear”**

PSALM 46:1

## | World

**Friday 1 May**

As the global impact of Covid-19 becomes more apparent, pray against the power of fear, which the enemy is so clever at using against the church. Pray that the church worldwide will stand with no fear, proclaiming God's love and spreading the message of peace to a world which so desperately needs Him.

## | North Africa

**Saturday 2 May**

Almost all believers in North Africa are from a Muslim background and face intense persecution from family and society. They're kicked out of their homes and jobs and denied their legal rights. Some even fear being killed for their new faith. Ask the Lord to strengthen these believers and pray that they can connect to other Christians who can support them.

**Sunday 3 May**

Islèm\* heard about Jesus through social media, but has to keep her faith secret from her father for fear of violence (see Magazine p.8). Pray for her protection and that she can continue to receive support through the online Christian community she is now part of.

\*Names changed for security reasons

**Monday 4 May**

Alima (22) is a secret believer who is the daughter of an imam. Recently her father found her Bible and threatened to kill her. She managed to escape and a friend put her in contact with Open Doors. Pray for Open Doors partners helping her with practical and spiritual support.

**Tuesday 5 May**

For isolated believers in the region, the Covid-19 crisis comes on top of being rejected by society because of their faith. Social media is a lifeline for many of these believers. Pray for Open Doors partners stepping up their online activities to reach these believers with online teaching, Bible-reading and prayer-apps, and fellowship.

**Wednesday 6 May**

As Covid-19 spreads, churches in North Africa are asking for Open Doors' support to organise their church services and ministry online. Pray for Open Doors teams setting up online training to help local churches build an online presence and activities during this time of social distancing.

**Thursday 7 May**

Many Christians in North Africa have lost their jobs because of the coronavirus crisis and have no income. They often no longer have a family network to support them. Pray for Open Doors teams working with churches to assess the needs of these believers and provide vital practical support.

**Friday 8 May – Tunisia**

Praise God that the North African church is growing! In Tunisia, for example, which had only around 80 believers in 1998, and 1500 by 2015, in the last two years an estimated 800 new believers have been added to the church. "I believe there will be a new explosion of growth in North Africa," says a local believer. "People are seeking. I personally am connected to at least eight people searching." Ask God to continue to build His church.

## | Arabian Peninsula

**Saturday 9 May**

Pray for those who mentor and disciple new believers across the Arabian Peninsula. Pray that they will find ways to continue to connect with those who have no other support, and strengthen them with the love of Jesus.

**Sunday 10 May**

Media is a vital tool for connecting new believers to other Christians in their area. The challenge is to find culturally adapted materials that will draw local people to websites. Ask God to provide people with the media skills, spiritual discernment and courage to work on media productions.

**Monday 11 May**

Karim's\* brother is asking many questions about faith. Ask the Lord to give Karim the right words to share God's truth and pray that his

brother's heart will be open to accept Jesus as His saviour.

**Tuesday 12 May**

Pray for Abdu Malek\* as he shares the Word of God in his community. Pray that he will build trust among those to whom he is speaking, and pray that those who hear will have courage to step out in faith and follow Jesus.

**Wednesday 13 May**

In a country of arranged marriages, it is difficult for young people to convince their families that they want to marry someone from a different tribe, economic group or faith. Pray with two young believers who are asking God to provide them with wives who also love Jesus. Pray that they will meet those whom God has chosen for them and that their families will agree to their marriages.

**Thursday 14 May – Saudi Arabia**

Praise God for Saudis who are asking questions about faith! There are not enough believers available in the country, willing and able to connect to these seekers and help answer their questions. Ask the Lord to send out more workers into this harvest field.

**Friday 15 May**

Pray for a spiritual awakening across the Arabian Peninsula. Pray that the church will be filled with God's Spirit, listening daily to His Word, abiding in His love and bearing spiritual fruit that will last (John 15).

# Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



**Asia Bibi: “You are in God’s hands and you are vital”**

**Praise God that Asia Bibi, the Christian woman who spent nearly nine years on death row after being convicted under Pakistan’s harsh blasphemy laws, is now free and living safely in Canada with her family! Her story is such a testament to the power of perseverance in prayer.**

Asia recently met with the Open Doors team in Paris, where they spoke to her about her experiences, her faith and her message for those who’ve supported and prayed for her.

“My faith has always been strong because my family had a lot of devotion, but it did get stronger [in prison] because now I know that God is with me – and God doesn’t leave you alone, He is always with us,” she says.

“I never doubted [God], because when I was born, the priest told my mother, ‘This girl is going to be tested by God.’ And my parents kept telling me this story and I knew that this was going to happen some day.”

Asia held on strongly to her conviction that she was not guilty of the charges placed against her.

**“God doesn’t leave you alone, He is always with us”**

“I had a lot of patience and hope in my heart while I was in prison. And I was certain I would be released one day because I was innocent. I knew that some day I was going to be free. When my father came to visit me, he said that I’ve been accused in the name of Jesus – and I told him I would also be released in the name of Jesus.”

To all those who prayed for her while she was in prison, Asia says, “God is with you in the exact way He was with me. You are in God’s hands and you are vital.”

Thank you so much for walking alongside Asia in prayer throughout this difficult time. We must never underestimate the importance or power of coming before God on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters!

## **PRAY:**

- For Asia and her family, as they heal from the trauma of the past decade and start building a new life
- For Christians who are imprisoned or awaiting trial on false charges – pray that justice would be done in each case
- That Pakistan’s blasphemy laws would be made fairer and that Christians wouldn’t be targeted.



(ABOVE) Asia (with her daughter) speaks at a press conference in France; (RIGHT) Asia before she spent nearly 9 years on death row in Pakistan

## | India

### **Saturday 16 May**

India has gone into lockdown to combat the Covid-19 crisis. Many persecuted Christians have lost their income and are asking for urgent help. Pray for Open Doors partners helping those in great need. "Most church members are daily wage labourers and no work for the day means no food for the day," says Open Doors partner Rahul\*. "We have a plan to reach out to those who are truly starving."

### **Sunday 17 May**

Pastor Dhiraj\*'s home and church are located in a slum. "The church members are very poor, but each week they give an offering. This is my only salary. But now we are in lockdown and there are no more offerings. I can go nowhere and I cannot find other work." Pray for Open Doors partners helping Dhiraj and other pastors in need.

### **Monday 18 May**

Please pray for unity among the Christian leaders all over India. Pray that the church will stand strong and share Jesus in the midst of all the challenges she faces.

### **Tuesday 19 May**

Praise God for Mr. Mahesh\* who recently accepted Jesus as his saviour! He has asked for prayer for his sons, who have become very abusive towards him because of his new faith. Pray that they will come to know the love of God and accept Him as their saviour, too.

### **Wednesday 20 May**

Pray for those advocating on behalf of pastors who have been imprisoned because of their Christian activities. They risk their own safety by doing this work. Ask the Lord to protect them and give them boldness and wisdom.

### **Thursday 21 May**

When Aditi (16) and her parents came to Christ, her wider family removed their financial support and her parents had no means to pay for her education. Give thanks that Open Doors partners were able to fund her school fees. "We thank you so much for your initiative with which we were able to pay my daughter's school fees," says Aditi's father. "God bless you all."

## | Hope for the Middle East

### **Friday 22 May**

Pray for wisdom for Open Doors staff and local partners to know how to proceed with projects in the Middle East under the limitations of Covid-19. Pray that they will find creative ways to continue to spread the love and hope of Christ at this challenging time.

### **Saturday 23 May – Iraq**

Iraq is taking safety measures because of the coronavirus crisis. Schools, universities, restaurants and public places are closed. Pray that children can continue to learn - many are already behind in their education because of the IS insurgency. Also pray for families who are now

housebound. Pray for peace and joy in their houses.

### **Sunday 24 May – Iraq**

Pray a blessing on the doctors and nurses treating patients with coronavirus, and protection for those who cannot afford or access medical care. "Iraq has a weak health system," says Open Doors partner, Father Daniel. "The only thing we can do to stay safe is to stay at home. It's a big crisis here."

### **Monday 25 May – Syria**

Many displaced families are still living in tents or caravans in displacement camps. They have very little means to protect themselves and their families from being infected by coronavirus. Ask the Lord to cover them with His wings and protect them from this disease (Psalm 91:3-4).

### **Tuesday 26 May – Syria**

Thank God that Open Doors partners were able to implement 152 income-generating projects in Syria last year. Pray for wisdom for the Syrian team to identify where to start more Centres of Hope and to know how best to resource local churches.

### **Wednesday 27 May – Lebanon**

Please keep praying for a return to political and social stability in Lebanon, as unrest continues. Pray that the church will remain strong and united in serving their communities with the true peace only Jesus can bring.

### **Thursday 28 May - Iran**

Many experts believe the government is under-

reporting the true scale of the coronavirus crisis in Iran. One house church leader reports: "We are dying here and no one seems to care. A lot of people around us fall ill and end up in hospitals or are dying." Ask God to pour out His healing power, and to give wisdom to those in power to effectively manage the outbreak.

### **Friday 29 May – Iran**

The rift between the government and people of Iran continues to grow and more and more people are resisting the message of hate towards the West that the government is propagating. Pray for love to grow in the hearts of Iranians instead of hate, and that Christians will take the lead in spreading God's love.

### **Saturday 30 May – Iran**

Remember Iranian believers who are in prison or are being monitored by the authorities. Pray that the peace of Jesus would prevail in their hearts and for confidence that God the Father is near, no matter how stressful their situation.

### **Sunday 31 May – UK&I**

As the coronavirus crisis continues to impact all our lives, pray that the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of the church in the UK and Ireland to learn from the courage of persecuted believers for whom isolation has long been a daily reality. Pray that many will be moved to pray and give to support those for whom coronavirus comes on top of persecution and exclusion.

\*Names changed for security reasons



**CREATIVE**

**COMMUNICATION:**

### Your support connects isolated Christians

**Nadhir\* connects with Christians across North Africa via social media and podcasts – it's one of the only ways he can.**

Your prayers and support make it possible for him to continue to share Jesus in creative ways and connect with believers who might otherwise have no way of communicating with one another. And Nadhir knows what it is to be isolated for his faith.

He grew up in a Muslim family, but became a Christian in his late teens, after

dropping out of the mosque and joining the local rap scene. A friend and fellow rapper handed him a Bible and everything fell into place.

**“This is what I need. I need Jesus.”**

“I read this Bible and when I'm reading, I'm feeling like something inside me, it's like a sweet thing inside me,” he says. “I didn't feel it before when I read the Quran... This is what I need. I need this thing. I need Jesus.”

However, Nadhir's new faith came at a cost. When he confessed to being a Christian, his father was furious.

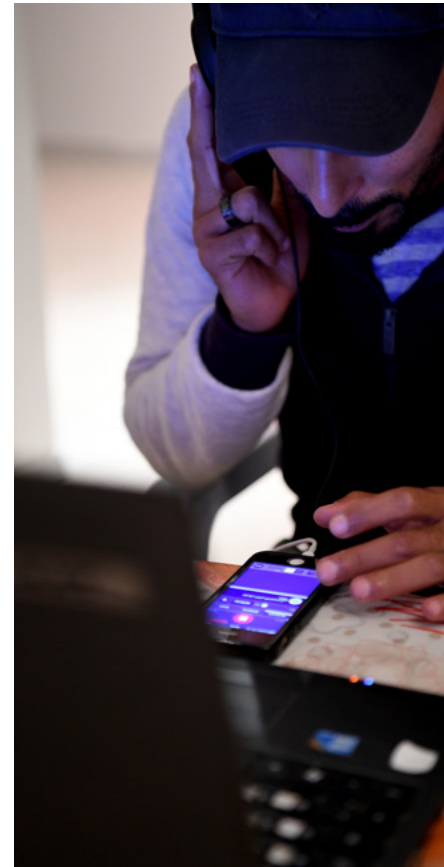
“I don't want to see you again in my house,” he said. “Never come back here, because you are not my son and I don't know you. And I will be going to the government to remove your name from my family, because you are a Christian.”

Nadhir spent many nights homeless. Eventually he was taken in by another Christian, and he soon discovered that he was part of a much bigger family than the one he had left behind.

Now, he encourages other Christians in North Africa. Believers from Muslim backgrounds struggle with isolation, so Nadhir leads a secret church in his home and is putting the skills he learnt as a rapper to good use with a podcast for new believers.

Thanks to you, Open Doors partners are also helping him to set up a coffee shop so that Christians can meet together. Nadhir's ministry is vital.

Praise God that, shortly after Nadhir married, he was reconciled to his family! Please pray for believers who are still ostracised and exiled from loved ones for their choice to follow Jesus.



(OPPOSITE) Nadhir, a former rapper, communicates the gospel through online podcasts; (ABOVE) Your support means Nadhir can reach more people in North Africa with the good news.

**> You can watch Nadhir telling his story at [www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews)**

**Why not share it with your small group or prayer group too?**

\*Name changed for security reasons

## | North Africa

### Monday 1 June

The coronavirus crisis has caused much fear and uncertainty in North African society. Pray that the church can be salt and light during this time, and that it will find creative ways to meet and to support isolated believers, especially the elderly.

### Tuesday 2 June

The church in this region is growing, but many leaders are young and lack training. As a result, some new believers don't know how to live as Christians. Ask God to use the leadership and discipleship training programmes run by Open Doors to build His church.

### Wednesday 3 June

Pray for Open Doors partners trying to reach new believers who have no other support. "We try to equip them with the living Word of God... so they can face persecution and stand firm in their faith," says one worker. "If we can't offer discipleship training, new believers might slide back to Islam or to a life of a non-belief and we could lose them."

### Thursday 4 June – Libya

Reports of food shortages due to the Covid-19 crisis and lack of information from the government are causing great insecurity. For isolated believers especially, a lock down adds to their isolation.

Pray that God's people will hold on to the truth that Jesus is Lord, and ask Him to supply all their needs.

### Friday 5 June – Libya

Pray for Marwan\*, a believer who is on his own and is coming under a lot of pressure from his family to deny his faith. Pray that he can be connected into a Christian community so he can receive the encouragement he needs to hold on to Jesus.

### Saturday 6 June – Morocco

Pray for Kais\*, a young believer who lost everything when he chose to follow Jesus. He is slowly rebuilding his life, but it is a struggle. Pray for Christ's strength to persevere.

### Sunday 7 June – Morocco

Pray for Christians involved in social work. Their example of taking care of the vulnerable is a great witness in Moroccan society. Ask God to give more believers vision for how to be involved in this vital work.

### Monday 8 June – Egypt

Pray with Christians in Egypt, who are asking the Lord to draw many to Himself during this time of crisis. "My prayer is for millions who have to stay under voluntary or compulsory quarantine," says one believer, "that the Lord may speak to their hearts, show Himself to them in dreams and visions and, through faithful Christian witness, multitudes of people may come to the Lord."



### Tuesday 9 June

Pray for Open Doors staff struggling to meet the huge needs of the church at this time. "It's hard when I see cases of persecuted people in our churches that we just cannot support because we don't have enough people or money," says Farid\*. Ask the Lord to multiply Open Doors' resources and to give Farid wisdom to know where best to focus his energies.

## | Yemen

### Wednesday 10 June

Pray for an end to the civil war which continues to ravage this nation. Ask the Lord to supernaturally intervene and overcome the region with His peace.

### Thursday 11 June

Around 17 million people in Yemen are in immediate need of humanitarian food assistance. Pray that humanitarian access to the worst affected areas will remain open despite the

ongoing conflict, so that those facing hunger, thirst and disease can get the aid they desperately need.

### Friday 12 June

Medical care is pretty sparse in Yemen. Some people are able to go abroad for care but many, especially the poor, have nothing. Please pray that hospitals that were damaged in the war will be rebuilt, that shipments of medicine and supplies will get to them, and that doctors and nurses will be paid and able to work.

### Saturday 13 June

Open church activities and private worship are forbidden here. Pray for encouragement and protection for secret believers gathering in small groups, as meeting together is dangerous.

### Sunday 14 June

Give thanks for Mohammad\* and Alima\*, who started four secret house groups in their home (see Magazine p20). Sadly, they have now had to flee the country. "I hope we can return to Yemen," says Mohammad. "I hope that one day I will see the church growing, bearing a lot of fruit." Ask God to answer his prayer.

### Monday 15 June

Praise God that He is building His church in Yemen in the midst of these hardships! "The church in Yemen is definitely growing," says Mohammad. "That is what you hear everywhere... We often hear of whole families coming to Christ."

\*Names changed for security reasons

# “I have discovered God’s true face”

## THE POWER OF PRAYING FOR OUR ENEMIES

**Youssef (29) used to be a respected Islamic cleric. He grew up in a Muslim home in the Sahel on the southern edge of the Sahara, and studied Islamic law, devoting his life to teaching the Quran.**

**“In my dreams, I saw a man with a golden crown”**

But then his dedication went a step further when he joined an Islamic extremist fighting group in Libya. They wanted to attack a church. The plan

was set in motion – tactics had been communicated and everything was ready. But, as Youssef discovered, God can disrupt even the most carefully prepared plots.

A few days before the attack, Youssef had a dream. He says, “As usual, there were two guards in front of my tent. I fell asleep and, in my dreams, I saw a man with a golden crown that shone very brightly. The person called out to me: ‘Youssef, Youssef, go and meet the Christians. Go back home and become a Christian.’”

“But I was convinced that the person was mistaken. ‘Are you in sound mind?’ I asked him. ‘Do you know who I am? Me, become a Christian?! I will never become a Christian!’ We spoke at length in my dream, but I can’t remember everything we said.”

Youssef woke up a changed man. He immediately resigned from the fighting group and returned home with only the clothes on his back.

He went straight to a church where believers were able to answer his myriad of questions. That same day, he committed his life to Isa al-Masih – Jesus Christ. “What the Bible says about love – loving your neighbour – is really great... Previously, I thought I loved God, but it is through this verse that I have discovered God’s true face.”

Youssef has not told anyone in his family about his conversion. But Jesus is enough. “All I want, is to know God and His Word and to strengthen my faith. Jesus is the way that leads to life. I have found the life and I have decided to follow Him.”

Jesus said, “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” (Matthew 5:44) Persecuted Christians around the world know what it is to live out this teaching of Jesus every day – and Youssef’s story is confirmation that God answers those prayers.

**Want more inspiring stories like Youssef’s? Sign up to our regular emails and receive stories of courageous faith direct to your inbox! Go to [www.opendoorsuk.org/resources](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources)**



Youssef, sitting inside his home

## | Asia

### **Tuesday 16 June**

The impact of coronavirus in Asia is immense. Many Christians are seen as the lowest in their societies and are neglected when aid is provided. Pray for Open Doors partners on the ground trying to reach Christian communities that are cut off with vital aid.

### **Wednesday 17 June**

Training and discipleship activities have been postponed in many countries due to coronavirus lockdowns, yet the needs remain great. Pray for God's guidance for the Open Doors Asia team planning alternative ways to strengthen the church.

### **Thursday 18 June – China**

Give thanks for Pastor Huang, who leads a church in Wuhan, the centre of the Covid-19 outbreak. "The virus can't stop us," he says. "We have more than 50 groups, almost all meeting via the internet. Of those 50, we have more than 30 groups spending two hours every day to pray, worship, share and testify together!"

### **Friday 19 June – China**

Pastors have taken to the internet to stir the church to rise up and pray for their nation, the Chinese government, and other countries affected by the virus. Where possible, believers have gone to the streets to hand out face masks, daily supplies and much needed words of encouragement. Pray that

churches round the world will follow their example, grow stronger through this epidemic and clearly hear God's voice for their nation.

### **Saturday 20 June - Myanmar**

Pray for protection from Covid-19 for those living near the northern border with China. Most are Kachin Christians, and many are displaced. Civilians living in camps will be at high risk if the disease spreads, mainly due to lack of medical facilities and neglect of public health care from the government.

### **Sunday 21 June – India**

Give thanks that Pastor Khum\*, who is also a hardworking farmer, was able to attend a livelihood programme run by our local partners. "Thank you for giving us this livelihood training," he said. "It is far more precious than giving us money aid. I have seven acres of land where I will continue to farm, tend and plant more crops."

### **Monday 22 June – Sri Lanka**

Church leaders are concerned about the effect of the lockdown on new believers. Without the opportunity to hear God's word and meet with other believers, they are more vulnerable to pressure to abandon their faith. Pray that they will find ways to connect online.

### **Tuesday 23 June – Sri Lanka**

Christians in Sri Lanka are reporting an increase in opposition. "Our people are hearing of believers physically attacked," says an Open Doors

partner. "There is also a lot of monitoring of churches. Please pray for God's protection for all the pastors and believers, especially those who are isolated in Buddhist villages."

## | Persecuted Women

### **Wednesday 24 June – Middle East**

Give thanks that Open Doors was able to run a seminar for divorced women, many of whom have been terribly abused by their (ex-)husbands because of their faith. Please pray for healing from trauma, and that these women will be able to forgive those who abused them.

### **Thursday 25 June – North Africa**

Open Doors provides support to women who have been thrown onto the street by their families because of their faith in Jesus. Pray for wisdom for our partners providing relief aid and spiritual care to encourage these women.

### **Friday 26 June – Southern Philippines**

Pray for healing for Laura, a survivor of the 2019 church bombings in Jolo. She recently attended a trauma debriefing run by Open Doors. "I am thankful that we were given the chance to let out our burdens," she says. "Now that I have joined the debriefing, I feel so relieved."

### **Saturday 27 June – India**

Sema\* has been married for

seven years but doesn't have children. Her husband and in-laws have been abusing her for this for many years, and when she recently accepted Jesus, her husband decided to divorce her. Ask God to change her husband's heart and draw him and his family to faith in Christ.

### **Sunday 28 June – Central Asia**

House church leader Anastasia\* has led many to faith in Christ. Despite threats and monitoring by the police, she runs retreats for women in the mountains. Pray that these retreats will not be discovered. "The secret service may say I'm too old," says Anastasia. "They see me as a retired old woman. But God is not retiring and neither am I. There's so much to do in God's kingdom."

### **Monday 29 June – Myanmar**

Open Doors partners recently started a marriage enrichment course for local believers. Pray that the training can continue online and will strengthen many families with God's love.

### **Tuesday 30 June – Chad**

Achiam\* (20) was born blind and heard the gospel at a school for the blind. When she went home for the holidays, her family beat and excluded her. During a visit from Open Doors, she said: "Thank you for coming. My parents will know that my Christian brethren support me. May God bless you! Pray for my family, for God to change their hearts so they can discover the way of Christ."

\*Name changed for security reasons





## #9 Iran

# A unique and valuable opportunity

**“Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity...”**

EPHESIANS 5:15-16

**For many of us, isolation is a tough challenge. But we can choose to view this time as God working through His church in a new way – an opportunity that Mojtaba from Iran didn't miss.**

He was thrown in prison for three years for leading a house church, but God gave him a purpose. He says, “I saw the huge gates of the prison and the big locks on the doors. No one can enter... But an inner voice said, ‘Look, I took you through these doors and gates to talk to people about Jesus.’”

God blessed Mojtaba and the prisoners as he spoke to them about his faith. An imam even smuggled in portions of the Bible for them to study!

Mojtaba reflects on how to

pray for our church family in prison:

“It's good to pray that God releases

them. But

we should pray also: ‘God, please use them in this unique and valuable opportunity, that they can share Your gospel with sinners, with people.’”



Mojtaba

*Father, thank You that You are present with me wherever I am. Help me to see opportunities to grow close to You and to help build Your kingdom. Amen.*

**> You can watch Mojtaba tell his amazing story at [www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/prayernews)**



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