

OPEN DOORS

MAGAZINE



Arise Africa

Will you stand up to violent persecution?

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ISAIAH 60:1-3

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the Lord rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”**





A Letter from the Editor

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” John 10:10

The level of violence in sub-Saharan Africa is truly deplorable. Every year, thousands of Christians are killed for their faith by Islamic militants. Thousands more lose their homes, their land, and their livelihoods. Their aim is to destabilise families, extinguish faith, and crush the life of the church.

And it’s just as deplorable that the world isn’t aware of these atrocities. Open Doors supporters have faithfully prayed for the African church for many years – but the media seldom reports these attacks, and the suffering of our brothers and sisters seems to

be largely ignored. Forgiveness is powerful and important – it’s something I find so inspiring in Ayuba’s* story of healing and restoration (p4) – but, without justice, perpetrators will continue to attack with impunity. We have to listen to their testimonies, share their stories with others and help ensure the future of a strong and resilient church in Nigeria and the wider region.

Our brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa are calling for the global church to join them in standing up to extreme violence. It’s a vital opportunity to help the world wake up to what our courageous church family are experiencing. Today, will you answer their call?

**Name changed for security reasons*



ARISE AFRICA

Ayuba's Story

Violent persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa is unprecedented. Christians are being murdered, raped and kidnapped on a scale not seen before. We must stand with the African church, in support and prayer.

Gunshots cracked across the sky and chilling news flew round the village: Boko Haram are coming. Twenty-year-old Ayuba* and his brothers and sisters dropped everything and ran for their lives.

“The next morning everywhere was silent,” said Ayuba, who spent the night hiding in the bush with his siblings. “When we approached our home, I could see three bodies on the ground. I recognized my father by his clothing. I went to his side, dropped to my knees, and prayed.”

“Boko Haram sent a list of people they wanted to kill. My name was on it.”

Ayuba’s father was one of nine Christians slaughtered by Islamic extremists that night, in northeast Nigeria. Militants had asked if he was Muslim or a Christian. He refused to hide his faith in Jesus and replied, “Christian.” He was beheaded on the spot.

“I brought a cloth to cover my father’s body,” said Ayuba. “I told my

siblings not to come, but they did. We stood and cried.”

Deadly risk

More than 4,600 Christians like Ayuba’s father were killed for their faith in northern Nigeria last year. In the lawless, bandit-controlled areas in the north, attacks on both Christians and Muslims are rampant and aggressors act with impunity. But it’s not confined to Nigeria. Violence against Christians has reached new heights right across Sub-Saharan Africa.

The statistics are horrifying. Out of every 10 Christians murdered for their faith, nine are killed in this region. Out of 2,700 Christians kidnapped in 2022, 92% were in northern Nigeria. And when you look at the 20 most dangerous countries to be a Christian, according to the World Watch List, 13 of them are in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Extremist groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State and al-Shabab are part of the jihadist movement which seeks to expand Sharia/Islamic law across the continent. They target Christians for violent killings, kidnap, rape and intimidation. Persecution is systemic, widespread and brutal.

For Ayuba, it didn’t end with the murder of his father.

“A few weeks after the attack, Boko Haram sent a list to our village of people they were coming to kill,” said Ayuba. “*My name was on it.*”

He had no choice but to flee.



Ayuba, pictured on the left in shadow to protect his identity, receives trauma counseling at Open Doors' Trauma Center.

Stand up

Right now, there are more Christians in Africa than anywhere else in the world – and the church is youthful and growing. But the extreme, persistent aggression towards our brothers and sisters in parts of the region puts the future of the church at risk.

It's time for Christians everywhere to join our African family and stand up, as one, to violent persecution. Together, we must give, pray, and encourage our persecuted family.

"I learned to leave everything at the feet of Jesus."

Open Doors' vision is for the church in Sub-Saharan Africa to persevere and be resilient, resourceful, and influential. Last year, we helped 400,000 Christians in the region – and by 2027 we want to support four million believers. Your gifts and prayers are vital.

Because when you stand with those risking everything for Jesus, like Ayuba,

it's life-changing.

Faith strengthened

"I had decided never to forgive and to avenge my father's death," said Ayuba. "It was all I could think about." Ayuba was filled with rage and anger – not just over his father, but for his stolen youth and lost opportunities.

But at the Open Doors Shalom Centre in Nigeria, Ayuba received trauma healing and care. He summed up what he learned in a single word: "Forgiveness," he said with a smile. "I decided to let go of my anger and have peace. I learned to leave everything at the feet of Jesus."

Ayuba recalls the experience of Joseph, beaten and sold by his brothers. "You intended to harm me," Joseph said, "but God intended it for good (Gen 50:20)." In the same way, Boko Haram wanted to destroy Ayuba's faith – but today, he is filled with forgiveness, courage and love.

**name changed and representative cover image used for security reasons*



Out of every 10 Christians **murdered** for their faith last year, nine were killed in Sub-Saharan Africa.



13 of the top 20 most **dangerous** countries to be a Christian are in Sub-Saharan Africa.



We aim to reach **4 million** people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2027.

Will you stand up to violent persecution in Africa?

PLEASE PRAY

- That every family affected by violence will receive spiritual, physical and emotional support.
- For young Christians like Ayuba, for courage and faith, resilience and perseverance.
- That God will stir the church to action, in unity with our African brothers and sisters.

PLEASE GIVE

Every HK\$380 could help three Christians who've experienced extreme violence by providing hope and healing at a trauma center.

Every HK\$490 could provide food, medicine and other emergency relief to help two believers displaced by persecution survive.

Every HK\$670 could give a month's education to 17 young people from persecuted families, giving them hope for the future.

ARISE AFRICA

What you need to know

The future of the church in Sub-Saharan Africa is at risk unless we act. Arise Africa is a four-year campaign to see the global church stand up to violent persecution. Will you be part of it?

What's happening to Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa?

Violence in this region is at an all-time high. Deadly jihadist groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State and Al-Shabaab are active in countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali. They operate amid chaos and banditry, killing both Christians and Muslims. But Christians are especially targeted.

Latest annual data for Sub-Saharan Africa shows:

5,170 Christians were killed for their faith

1,500 Christians were sexually violated*
*conservative estimate

2,714 Christians were abducted



Mary was raped repeatedly while held captive by extremists in north west Nigeria. Support from people like you gives her hope.*

What's the impact of this violent persecution?

SPIRITUAL IMPACT: The faith of ordinary Christians can be rocked by persecution. There's a risk they give up on Jesus – or even become radicalized by dangerous ideologies. The survival of the church is at stake.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT: Victims of violent persecution are traumatized. They feel angry and hopeless. Some seek revenge, creating a cycle of violence. Others may become depressed. The church is destabilized.

PHYSICAL IMPACT: More than 12 million people across Sub-Saharan Africa are displaced, putting the very presence of the church in certain areas at risk. Large parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, have been stripped of a Christian presence.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT: Extremists steal livelihoods, issue exorbitant kidnapping ransoms and destroy homes to wreck the lives of Christians, and shake the foundations of the church.

But isn't Christianity thriving in Africa?

In many ways, yes. There are more Christians in Africa than anywhere else in the world. It's a youthful and growing church. But our brothers and sisters in some places face an unprecedented onslaught. Many choose to follow Jesus in the face of unimaginable risk, persevering in faith with courage and resilience. They should not be doing it alone.

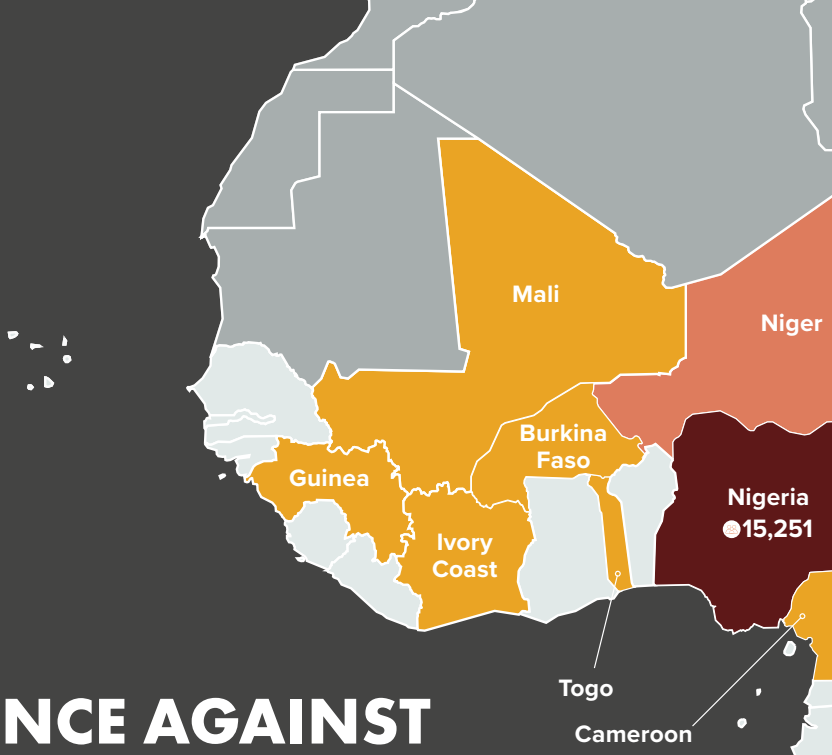
What's Arise Africa?

It's an invitation to you – to unite with your brothers and sisters in Sub-Saharan Africa and stand up to violent persecution.

Over four years, we aim to reach and support four million Christians in Sub-Saharan Africa, spiritually, physically and emotionally. We want to see the global church awakened and actively praying, giving and speaking out about what's happening. And we will campaign for change, to counter extremist ideology and rampant violence.

God's help is on the way. Will you stand up to violent persecution in Sub-Saharan Africa?

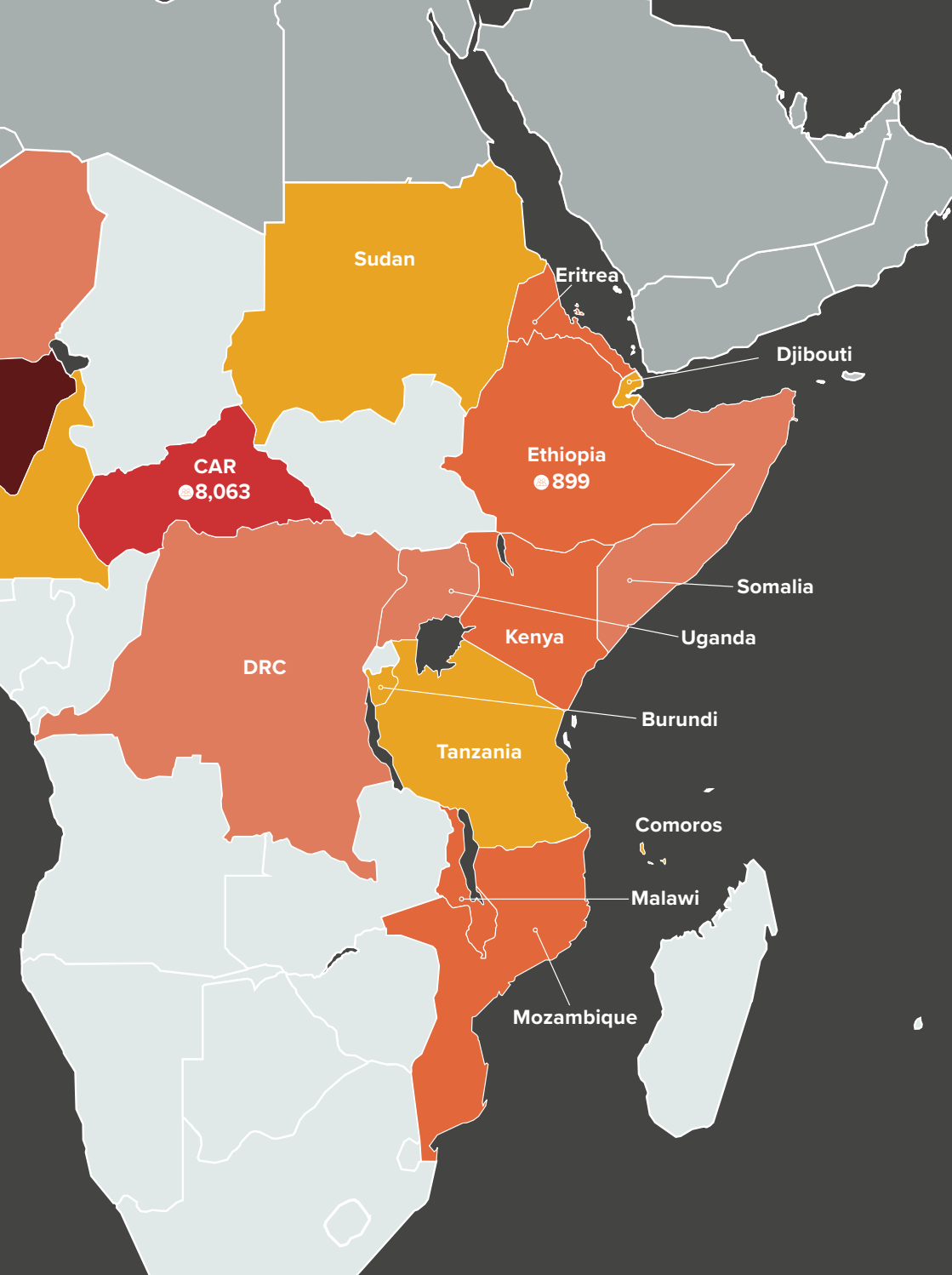
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VIOLENCE AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- No incidents recorded
 - 0-50 Christians affected
 - 51-200 Christians affected
 - 201-1000 Christians affected
 - >8000 Christians affected
 - >15,000 Christians affected
-
- Specific number of Christians affected

Data from verified field incidents in 2022



YOUR IMPACT

Healing wounds of persecution

Mary's abduction by Fulani extremists threatened to ruin her life and destroy her faith. But your gifts and prayers rescued this young Nigerian woman and her family.



Warning: Mary's story contains content that some may find distressing.

For 54 days, Mary* was held captive by extremist Fulani militants. She was sexually abused, repeatedly. Mocked for her faith. Forced to cook for her captors while she had only animal food to eat.

The ordeal, deep in the forests of northwest Nigeria, had one purpose: to destroy this 20-year-old woman's faith in Jesus and destabilize her Christian community. It's a tactic employed by Islamic extremists across Sub-Saharan Africa, who are becoming increasingly violent, brutal and murderous in their persecution of believers.

"We were in the Sunday service when we heard a gunshot," recalls Mary. "Everybody started running, running, running. Some were falling down. They attack Christians because we worship Jesus and they want us out of this land."

"I thank God for the peace He brings to my life."

In the chaos and killing, Mary heard her sister calling – and went back. It was a mistake. Mary and three other women were captured by the militants. "They said if we didn't go with them, they'd kill us," she said.

What happened over the coming weeks changed Mary forever. But amid the fear, pain and humiliation, Mary held onto her faith. She even had the courage to share the gospel with her captors. "If you give your life to Jesus, he will forgive you and you can stop all these things you are doing," Mary told them.

Somehow, Mary's family raised the money to pay the ransom for her release. They borrowed more than they could ever repay – which, in Nigeria's honour culture, brought shame they could not shake off.

But despite her freedom, Mary still suffered. "The pain wasn't over. Every night, I dreamed of what happened to me. I couldn't be around people. I laughed, but not in my heart. I didn't have peace."

That's when your support, through Open Doors, made a difference. Mary was invited to our trauma care center, where she received trauma counselling and rediscovered her identity in Christ. Open Doors partners are also helping to buy essentials for the family and fund Mary's education, since there was no money for school after paying the ransom.

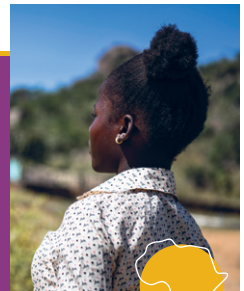
Your gifts and prayers strengthened Mary and fought back against violent persecution. But sadly, this faithful young woman recently died from complications relating to surgery. Both Mary and her family wanted her story to be heard, as many of these stories remain hidden. Our vision is that no one faces persecution and trauma alone.

In her final interview with Open Doors, Mary said, "I thank God for the peace He brings to my life. And I thank Him for using people like you to help me."

**name changed and representative image used for security reasons*

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Mary's life and faith and pray for her family as they grieve.
- Pray for God's protection over other young Christian women in Nigeria, who live with daily risk.
- Stand as one with the church in Africa, and pray boldly for an end to violent persecution.





DID YOU KNOW?

Water in Africa

The African continent has no lack of water sources with some of the longest rivers in the world, as well as large lakes: the Congo, Nile, and the Niger river as well as Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika.

It is, however, one of the driest continents in the world. Nine out of the ten countries with the highest percentage of population lacking access to clean water are located in Africa.

A 2022 report by the World Meteorological Organisation shows that Africa has seen the fastest increase in temperatures globally since 1900 and its seawater levels have risen faster than the global average as well.

The resulting “water stress and hazards” – be it droughts or floods – are threatening people’s lives and devastate communities. It can cause displacement and exacerbate conflicts.

Christians in certain parts of Africa often find themselves with no access to clean water, even if there are boreholes near to them – a result of persecution and discrimination from non-believing neighbours who deem them as “unclean”.

With your support, Open Doors has been able to help these persecuted believers dig boreholes for clean drinking water for the entire community, even those who persecute them.

DID YOU KNOW?

Why the radio is so popular in Africa

With an internet penetration rate of 43.1% compared to a global average of 66.2%, many Africans still reach for their radios for news and entertainment.

“Many people trust information from their radio sets over other resources,” veteran radio broadcaster John Masuku told press agency AP. “There is a lot of disinformation and misinformation so people still want to check... if it is not said on the radio then it is not fact. That is why radio is popular and celebrated in Africa.”

Also, radio sets are easy and inexpensive to use and increasingly have features such as inbuilt solar panels, a cell phone charger and a flashlight; all items that come in handy when you live in a place where - at best - electricity is unreliable and where the next available internet connection is miles away.

Radios are also one of the tools that can hold an SD card with Christian teaching materials, something Open Doors was able to support Christians with in Maiduguri, north-eastern Nigeria (see photo).





ARISE AFRICA



STAND UP AS ONE TO VIOLENT PERSECUTION IN AFRICA

Christians are under pressure like never before. Islamic extremists target believers across Sub-Saharan Africa and want to destroy the church.

Violent persecution wrecks the lives of people like Ayuba* in Nigeria. After his father was murdered by Boko Haram, Ayuba received a note. *He was next on the hit list.*

The survival of the church is at risk – unless we act, today, with courage and conviction.

Will you stand as one with Christians like Ayuba?

Every HK\$380 could help three Christians who've experienced extreme violence by providing hope and healing at a trauma center.

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We are a tax-exempt charity (under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue).

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