

OPEN DOORS

MAGAZINE



Those Who Dare

Bringing the light of Christ to a land of darkness

When Believers Dare...

Sharing the gospel in North Korea

4

World Watch List 2025

Released now

8

Living Among Wolves

Following Jesus in Yemen

10

"Be on your guard... On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles."

MATTHEW 10:16-18



Alex's Corner



**"I DO ALL
THIS FOR
THE SAKE OF
THE GOSPEL,
THAT I MAY
SHARE IN ITS
BLESSINGS."**

1 Corinthians 9:23

In the darkest places, Christians like Joo Min* from North Korea (pg 4) are determined to shine the light of Christ. They are not content to keep the good news of Jesus Christ to themselves, they want to make a difference.


It's not like they do not know the cost of doing so. But for these believers, witnessing about Jesus and making disciples for Him is a mandate that must be obeyed, even unto death. Knowing full well that their actions may very likely cause them even more persecution, they make the daily decision to carry their cross and follow Jesus.

On the fifty countries of the Open Doors World Watch List (pg 8), there are thousands of Christians like that – risking their lives for the sake of the gospel because Jesus took their guilt and suffering upon Himself.

May you be encouraged to also be a bold witness of Christ as you go on to read the stories of Zahra* from Yemen (pg 10), Viviana* from Colombia (pg 12), and Joo Min. And please remember to pray for them – they need your support to bring light to the darkest places.

**name changed for security reasons*

When believers dare...



Joo Min* is part of North Korea's small but faithful church. She risks everything to follow Jesus. Believers facing extreme persecution, like Joo Min, depend on your support.

As the World Watch List 2025 reveals the most dangerous places to be a Christian, meet one believer who dares to share Jesus in North Korea – and discover why she needs your help.

On the North Korea border, in the dead of night, Joo Min* crouches by a riverbank. Her heart is thumping and her breathing is fast. A guard comes into view and Joo Min freezes while he passes, a machine gun swinging by his side.

It's incredibly dangerous for Joo Min to be here. After all, North Korea is the world's most repressive, controlling regime.

But Joo Min is not escaping her homeland, as you might think. This young woman is risking everything to go back to North Korea – because she's on a mission to share Jesus.

DRIVEN OUT, CALLED BACK

Joo Min never expected to be in this position. She fled North Korea to seek work during the mid-1990s, when the country was struck by extreme food shortages (and some three million people died from starvation). Joo Min's father, an alcoholic, couldn't provide for the family and gave his daughter no choice but to leave in search of food and money.

"God was telling me: Go back to North Korea."

Joo Min wasn't a Christian then. Like all North Korean children, she'd been indoctrinated at school and believed missionaries were 'like wolves pretending to be sheep'. But after crossing the border, Joo Min found

refuge at an Open Doors safe house – and things began to change.

"At the safe house, I heard the gospel for the first time," said Joo Min. "Despite what I was told as a child, I accepted Jesus as my saviour. I started attending Bible studies and training every week."

With help from Open Doors, Joo Min established a life outside North Korea. She found a job and sent support to her family back home. She grew in faith, got baptised and forgave her father.

Then one day, Joo Min felt God calling her to the most perilous, daring task you could imagine.

"I felt God was telling me: Go back to North Korea. I felt called to share everything I've learned with other secret believers in my homeland."

EXTREME RISK

North Korea has been top, or near the top, of the World Watch List for more than 20 years. Christianity is completely forbidden and there are no churches, or Christians who openly follow Jesus. If a secret believer is discovered, he or she faces severe punishment – including torture, interrogation or life in a labour camp. Owning a Bible can mean a death sentence.

But despite the danger, Open Doors estimates there are around 400,000 Christians in North Korea. They operate in secret, meeting in small, trusted groups to read the Bible and memorise verses. And among them are extraordinary people like Joo Min – who risk everything to share the gospel.

"I made the decision to cross the river again," says Joo Min, who now lives in North Korea and serves the underground church. "I know the risks. If

I am caught, I could end up in a labour camp paying a heavy price for being a Christian.”

GIFTS AND PRAYERS

Joo Min’s ministry is only possible because of the training and discipleship provided by people like you. Along the North Korea border, Open Doors runs a secret network of safe houses offering spiritual support to deepen the faith of believers. Through the network, we distribute Bibles and Christian material, and provide food, medicine and living essentials so Christians can survive.

Today, amid tightening regulations and brutal crackdowns, it’s more dangerous than ever to follow Jesus in North

“I know the risks.”

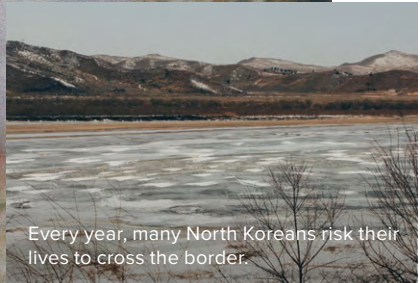
Korea. Christians here are the most persecuted in the world – and they need your support.

Your gifts and prayers can strengthen Christians like Joo Min, who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places. “Please pray for me,” says Joo Min. “Pray for protection and courage, so I can be light in a land overshadowed by darkness.”

“Because of the extreme risk to North Korean believers, we’ve disguised ‘Joo Min’: Her story is taken from accounts of two believers and details have been changed. Photos show an actor.”



Joo Min* is now a leader in North Korea’s underground church. It’s unbelievably dangerous. That’s why Christians like her need your gifts and prayers.



Every year, many North Koreans risk their lives to cross the border.



Open Doors fieldworkers run safe houses for North Korean refugees, where many hear about Jesus for the first time.



**THERE ARE
400,000
CHRISTIANS
ESTIMATED IN
NORTH KOREA**



**1 IN 7 BELIEVERS
WORLDWIDE
ARE PERSECUTED
FOR THEIR FAITH**

Will you support Christians who dare to share Jesus?

PLEASE PRAY

- Lift up our courageous brothers and sisters in North Korea as they dare to share Jesus, trusting that God will bear fruit in this persecuted church.
- Pray for Open Doors workers who are discipling and training North Korean believers right now, in safe houses along the border. Pray for wisdom.
- Ask for God's protection over Christians in all the places where following Jesus brings persecution and discrimination.

PLEASE GIVE

Every HK\$200 provides Bibles to two believers facing extreme persecution, so they can meet God in his Word.

Every HK\$390 strengthens the faith of a family of North Korean refugees by providing a safe house for six months, alongside other believers.

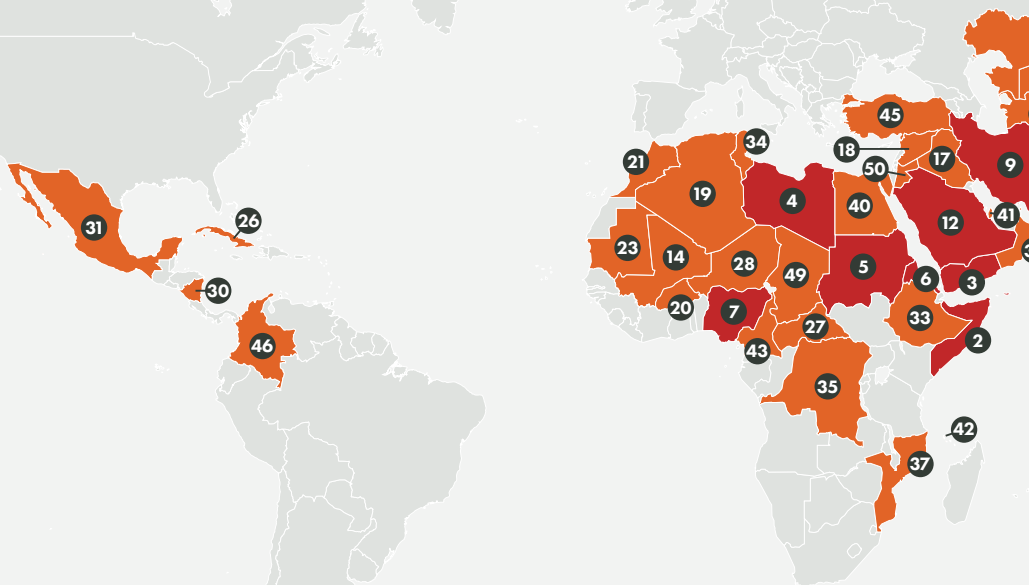
Every HK\$450 provides biblical leadership training to a woman like Joo Min, who has fled North Korea.

Pray for believers who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places

Visit www.opendoors.org.hk for the World Watch List 2025, out on 15 January.



WORLD WATCH LIST 2025



ABOUT THE LIST

The World Watch List is compiled by Open Doors' analysts using real-world data from experts on the ground in 150 countries. Persecution in each country is recorded using a points system which tracks violence and pressure. This measures the number and severity of violent incidents against Christians and the degree of pressure exerted against the practice of their faith in 5 spheres of life.

VIOLENCE



PRIVATE LIFE



FAMILY LIFE



COMMUNITY LIFE



NATIONAL LIFE



CHURCH LIFE



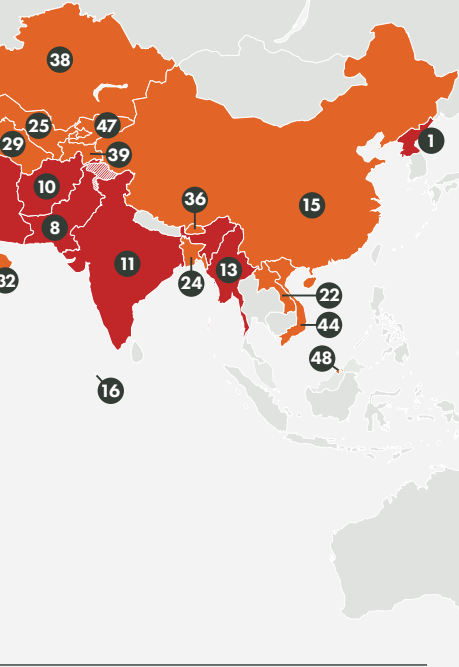
PERSECUTION

HIGH
41-60 points

Every country on the list is a country of persecution, with varying degrees of severity.

Maximum score for each is 16.7, maximum total of 100 when combined. Each country's ranking is determined by its total score out of 100, giving an indication of severity of persecution.



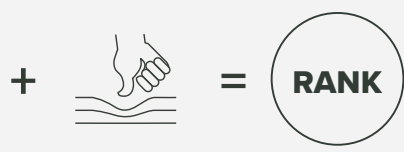


| Rank | Country | Total Score |
|------|--------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | North Korea | 98 |
| 2 | Somalia | 94 |
| 3 | Yemen | 94 |
| 4 | Libya | 91 |
| 5 | Sudan | 90 |
| 6 | Eritrea | 89 |
| 7 | Nigeria | 88 |
| 8 | Pakistan | 87 |
| 9 | Iran | 86 |
| 10 | Afghanistan | 85 |
| 11 | India | 84 |
| 12 | Saudi Arabia | 81 |
| 13 | Myanmar | 81 |
| 14 | Mali | 80 |
| 15 | China | 78 |
| 16 | Maldives | 78 |
| 17 | Iraq | 78 |
| 18 | Syria | 78 |
| 19 | Algeria | 77 |
| 20 | Burkina Faso | 76 |
| 21 | Morocco | 74 |
| 22 | Laos | 74 |
| 23 | Mauritania | 74 |
| 24 | Bangladesh | 74 |
| 25 | Uzbekistan | 73 |
| 26 | Cuba | 73 |
| 27 | Central African Republic | 72 |
| 28 | Niger | 72 |
| 29 | Turkmenistan | 71 |
| 30 | Nicaragua | 71 |
| 31 | Mexico | 71 |
| 32 | Oman | 70 |
| 33 | Ethiopia | 70 |
| 34 | Tunisia | 70 |
| 35 | Congo DR (DRC) | 70 |
| 36 | Bhutan | 69 |
| 37 | Mozambique | 68 |
| 38 | Kazakhstan | 68 |
| 39 | Tajikistan | 68 |
| 40 | Egypt | 68 |
| 41 | Qatar | 67 |
| 42 | Comoros | 67 |
| 43 | Cameroon | 67 |
| 44 | Vietnam | 67 |
| 45 | Turkey | 67 |
| 46 | Colombia | 66 |
| 47 | Kyrgyzstan | 66 |
| 48 | Brunei | 66 |
| 49 | Chad | 65 |
| 50 | Jordan | 65 |

PERSECUTION LEVELS

- **VERY HIGH** 61-80 points
- **EXTREME** 81-100 points

... in the list is ranked as having very high or extreme levels of persecution against Christians.



'WE LIVE AMONG WOLVES'

In Yemen, simply following Jesus can get you killed. But Zahra* shows what courageous faith looks like in this war-torn Middle Eastern country!

**Names changed for security reasons. The photos are of the real Zahra and are disguised to protect her identity.*



One gloomy weekday, Zahra received the call: “Anis* is dead.”

Anis was Zahra’s brother in Christ. Together, they went on visits to meet and tell others about Jesus together. “God was working through us!” Zahra says. “However, when the extremists took over our town, Anis started receiving threats:

“*You infidel... we will kill you.*”

A week later, extremists assassinated Anis. “I was shocked. I couldn’t believe it,” Zahra remembers. I was terrified. What if I was next?”

‘DESPITE THE DANGERS...’

It is daunting to live out your faith in a country like Yemen, which has been in the top five of the Open Doors’ World Watch List for several years. And yet, God chose Zahra to be His messenger amidst the darkness, to bring light to the people around her.

Today, Zahra is one of a handful of people who dares to share the gospel with Yemeni women. She disciples several women, meeting them face-to-face and creating a safe space for them to deepen their faith. This is desperately needed in Yemen, which has been in the middle of a brutal civil war for more than a decade.

Although her ministry puts her at great risk, witnessing the spiritual growth of these women over time has not only been a source of great joy for Zahra but has also reinforced her belief in her calling.

“I believe God has put me in this place to impact the lives of these women,” she says. “To bring them hope, and to reflect the true light of Christ amidst the horrific situation we are all living in.”

LIKE LAMB AMONG WOLVES

Zahra knows she is followed by secret police. “We live among wolves, and we know that,” she explains.

However, this reality does not stop her ministry. “I have chosen this way, and I know of the trials that come alongside this decision. Jesus took my pain, my suffering and my guilt; He carried His cross, and now it is my turn to carry the cross and continue the journey.”

“Now it is my turn to carry the cross.”

She added: “I am determined to stay here because I believe everyone deserves to hear about God’s love. I am encouraged when I see how the church in Yemen is growing, even in secret!”

Thanks to you, Open Doors can provide leadership coaching to Zahra through local partners and supply food and medicine to Yemeni believers. You also support safe houses, trauma healing and discipleship training.



PLEASE PRAY

“Your prayers keep us going. We are protected by your prayers. Please pray we will always be close to God, to be sensitive to his voice and what he calls us to do. We live in blessing because of your prayer support.” Salman*, a church leader in Yemen

A CHURCH ALWAYS ON THE RUN

Viviana's church in the mountains of Colombia is invisible – but God is present and at work.

A typical service in Viviana's* church doesn't look anything like a church service – it looks like a backpack-weaving class. But that's exactly why it works. "We are an invisible church here," she says. "We don't have a temple or the freedom to meet, so we gather in hidden places."

Viviana's faith in Jesus is a complete secret to the rest of her community in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, an isolated mountain range in northern Colombia. Her father is one of the leaders of the indigenous Arhuaco people, who believe in and worship Mother Nature. It's a community where the gospel is completely forbidden.

Being a Christian is seen as having a disease, Viviana explains; a kind of madness that must be cured by the spiritual leaders. "They perform rites to purify you," she says. As well as purification rites, a Christian might face physical punishment, imprisonment or expulsion from the community if they are discovered.



Viviana has extra reason to be cautious – if her faith is found out, she could have her 13-year-old daughter taken away from her. Thankfully, her daughter is currently safe in the Open Doors Children's Centre.

MEETING AT THE ESCAPE

To meet with other Christians, Viviana must leave her village – sometimes for days on end. This is becoming harder to do without arousing suspicion. For several years, she and other Christians from the indigenous reserve have been meeting in La Huida, or 'The Escape'. "The name originated when a brother from Peru came to visit us," says Josué*, who leads the meetings. "He called it that because, as Christians, we are always on the run."



In La Huida, Christians are preparing themselves to take the gospel to other communities, to preach in secret, and to strengthen believers who live in remote places and cannot go to La Huida often.

DISGUIISING THE CHURCH IN PLAIN SIGHT

In recent years, meeting has become even more difficult after some young people were arrested and forced to confess when they were caught going down to La Huida without good reason. As a result, Josué and others worked together with Open Doors partners to create a project to give Christians an excuse to meet together.

“If we do not go, other believers will not either, and that is what motivates us.”

The women have created their own strategy for meeting and sharing the gospel: a backpack-weaving project,

where they not only meet with other women to talk about the gospel, but also generate income to support the church’s missionary activities. Weaving backpacks is one of the most traditional customs of the Arhuaco women, so the class has attracted non-Christians too, who can hear about Jesus.

“God sends us out as His sheep amid wolves,” says Josué, referring to Matthew 10:16. “We must be wise and go because, if we do not go, other believers will not either, and that is what motivates us.”

PRAY

- That Viviana will be able to keep meeting with other Christians
- That God will equip Viviana, Josué and all His people as He sends them out
- That these secret church projects will introduce more people to the good news of the gospel.

**Name changed for security reasons*

Your support at work with Iranian believers!



Living as a Christian in Iran means living in constant fear and secrecy. Fatemeh* and her fellow believers constantly worry about getting arrested or being reported by neighbors who might hear them worshipping or notice their small gatherings.

The government strictly monitors and cracks down on Christian activities. A Christian never knows if the person they approach will betray them and hand them over to the authorities. With no one within the country to support or defend them, Christians constantly live on edge.

“In Iran, the government sees our faith as a threat,” Fatemeh reflects. “We live under constant surveillance and face different kinds of pressure. It’s a daily battle to keep our faith in such hostile conditions. But God is good!”

Through the unwavering support of Open Doors partners, Fatemeh finds strength and hope to continue serving in her country. The conferences and trainings held outside of Iran, along



with the online Bible studies and prayer meetings, all empower Fatemeh to stay faithful, to grow and to pursue her ministry. These gatherings provide a lifeline, offering not only spiritual nourishment but also a sense of community and solidarity.

“It’s a daily battle to keep our faith... But God is good!”

“In every meeting or session, I feel the presence of God and the support of my brothers and sisters in Christ,” she says. “It renews my spirit and gives me the courage to face each day.”

Thank you for your support of believers like Fatemeh all over the world!

**Name changed for security reasons*

Speak out for your family in Africa!

Don't forget! Christians in Africa have challenged us to help raise 1 million prayers and petitions for believers in sub-Saharan Africa over the next several years. This massive prayer effort will be coupled with a global petition that will be presented to world leaders, asking them to pay attention to what's happening—and take steps to change things!

Please, raise your voice for your brothers and sisters in sub-Saharan Africa. Visit www.opendoors.org.hk/arise-africa to learn how you can add your prayers and petitions.



Support Christians living where faith costs the most!

In Yemen and around the world, Christians risk everything to follow Jesus. The 2025 World Watch List shows the reality of this. Persecution remains one of the biggest issues facing God's people.

The best way to help is by becoming a **Monthly Donor**. Monthly Donors ensure that Open Doors is able to stand with believers in both urgent needs and through long-term, sustainable support.

Visit www.opendoors.org.hk, click "Donate" and select "Monthly Donation" to get started.

Make your Will for free

You can give your persecuted family hope of a brighter future by including Open Doors as one of the beneficiaries in your Will. It won't cost you anything right away but it will mean a lifetime of support for those who will suffer for following Jesus.

You can make a FREE Will with ForeverGift, if you donate HK\$10,000 to Open Doors Hong Kong. Find out more at www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/leavelegacy or www.forevergift.hk/opendoorshk.



You escape North Korea...

What would make you go back?

Imagine escaping the darkest place on earth, where persecution of Christians is severe.

But you feel God telling you to go back to share the gospel. Do you dare?

Joo Min* dared.

Because of supporters like you, Joo Min was able to return to North Korea to share the gospel. When you strengthen believers with your gift and prayers, you bring light to the darkest places.

Will you support Christians like Joo Min who dare to share Jesus in the darkest places?

Every HK\$390 strengthens the faith of a family of North Korean refugees by providing a safe house for six months, alongside other believers.

Visit donation.opendoors.org.hk to give now.

Thank you

**Name changed and re-enactment image used for security reasons*



Which countries are most dangerous places on earth to be a Christian?

Find out in this year's World Watch List.

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