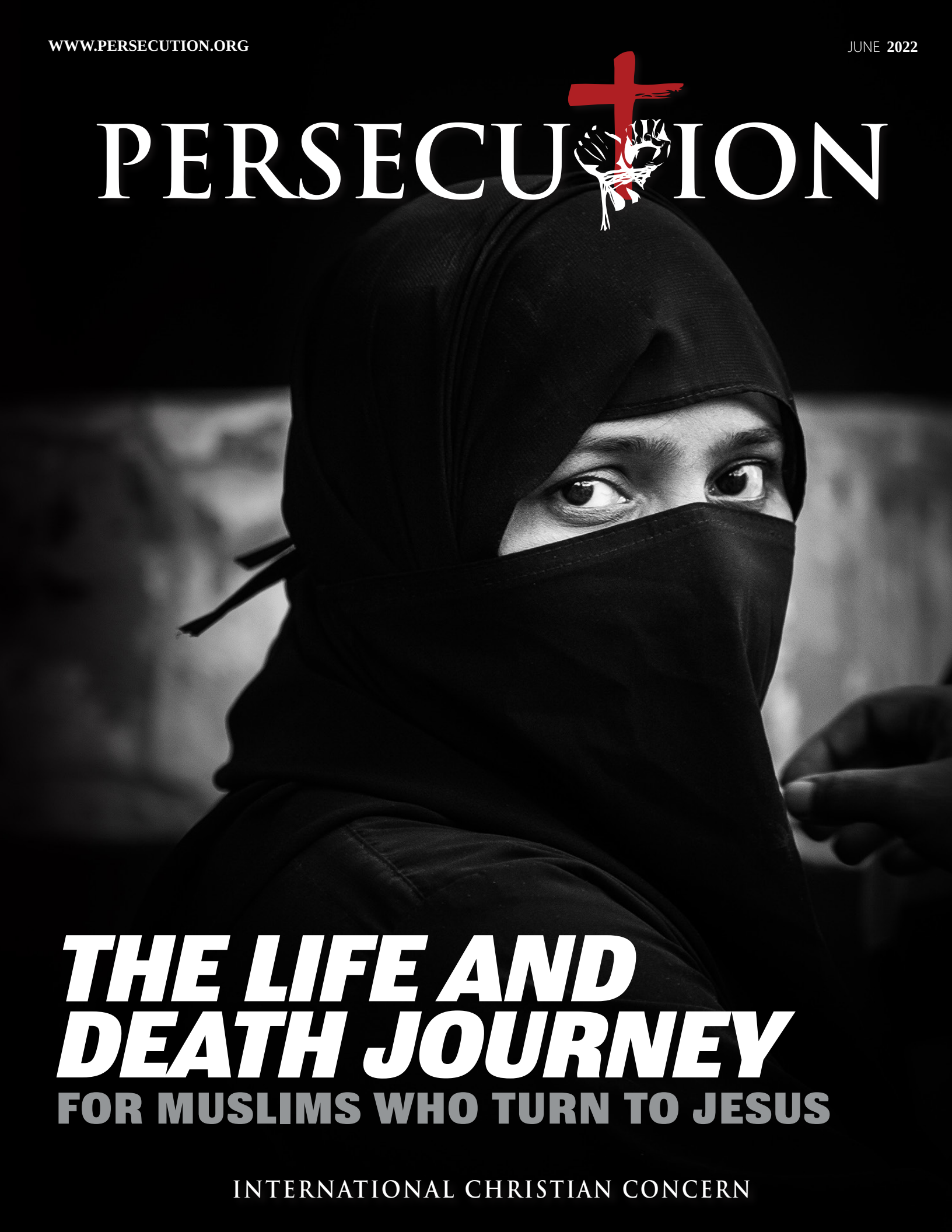


PERSECUTION



***THE LIFE AND
DEATH JOURNEY***
FOR MUSLIMS WHO TURN TO JESUS

INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN CONCERN

TURNING TO CHRIST

MEANS LOSING EVERYTHING FOR THEM.



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TEMPORARY LOSSES. ETERNAL GAINS.

CHRISTIAN CONVERTS FROM ISLAM STAND TO LOSE EVERYTHING

I do not think twice about heading out the door on Sunday mornings, Bible in hand and family in tow to our church just down the block. On the way I can shout worship songs at the top of my lungs, and nobody cares – well, they might cringe at my singing. But no one would try to kill me.

I can take my ability to worship and walk freely with Christ for granted – in part because my life is safe. Even if we choose to share the gospel in a dark alley at night, we may get robbed, but no one is trying to steal our soul.

Our brothers and sisters who were raised Muslims, however, and later declare their allegiance to Jesus, stand to lose everything. We refer to them as Muslim background-believers (MBBs). They are ostracized and must flee their communities. They can be threatened or killed – often by their family. Maria, 22, left her Muslim faith, only to be allegedly killed by her brother and uncle for singing Christian songs on TikTok.

You will meet others like Maria in this monthly magazine. All courageous in the face of threats, temporarily losing all that is dear to them. But gaining eternal life and the Holy Spirit.

We must empathize with their plight and turn our compassionate hearts and resources to rescue and disciple them. For International Christian Concern (ICC), that means rolling up our collective sleeves and working in the most dangerous places on Earth. About 100 Christian converts have been under our care in the Middle East and elsewhere, with many more waiting their turn.

I admire them. While I have been hardened after witnessing Christian brutality for many years, our lives are safe and filled with comforts. It gives me immense joy as a ministry to pull MBBs to safety, help them start a new life, and support them as they boldly share their newfound faith.

Thank you for walking this road with them. We could not do what we do without your support.

In Him,



JEFF KING

President: International Christian Concern

Author: *The Last Words of the Martyrs* and *Islam Uncensored*

"COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND HUMBLE IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT."

MATTHEW 11:28-30 (NIV)



YOUR DOLLARS AT WORK

ICC'S ONGOING INITIATIVES

SUPPORT FOR A WIDOW

Kadama and her family converted to Christianity a few years ago after her husband and son experienced a miraculous healing from mental illness. When the family accepted Christ, their Muslim relatives isolated them and began to curse them using witchcraft, which is common in Uganda. Kadama's husband was also a leader in the local mosque, which led to threats from the wider Muslim community when he converted.

In 2020, Kadama's husband tragically passed away, leaving her further isolated and struggling to care for their 10 children. Her extended family refused to support her unless she converted back to



Islam. ICC provided her with the inventory and six months of rent to help her start up her own small market to support her children. She expressed, "Who am I that

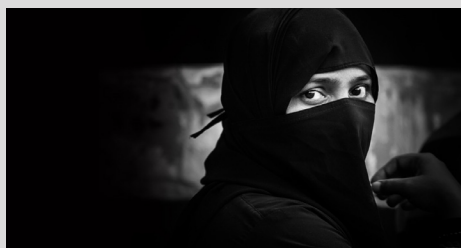
you're doing all this? Thank you, my God, for bringing these wonderful people in my life and I will continually give this testimony to all."

ONGOING INITIATIVES



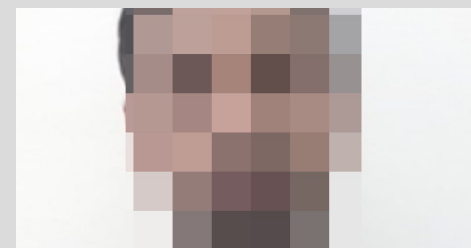
AFGHANISTAN CRISIS

Since the Taliban takeover last year, ICC has rescued many families and continues to provide for them. We helped a sex trafficking survivor who was forcibly married and raped as she tried to flee the country. With your support, we provided her with trauma counseling which she will be able to rely on for many months to come.



MBB OUTREACH

In April, ICC launched an initiative to support Muslim-background believers (MBBs) in the Middle East with safe housing, food, medical care, business support, and more. Throughout this issue of Persecution magazine, you will find the stories of MBBs around the world who we have supported thanks to your continued generosity.



GENERATION TRANSFORMATION

Generation Transformation pours support into a persecuted community, equipping participants with educational support and more. John and his sister were never able to obtain an education. To break generational poverty, ICC provided John with vocational training to open his own electrician business.

To learn more about how you can support these initiatives, visit www.persecution.org or give us a call at 800-422-5441.

MEDICAL CARE FOR YOUNG CONVERT

Benjamin grew up in a strict Muslim household with his parents in Uganda. One day, while visiting a friend, he attended a house church service and began to hear about Jesus. Weary of the repetitive prayers in a foreign language that was his routine in Islam, Benjamin was struck by the joy found at the church service through singing, dancing, and prayer.

As he learned more about Jesus, he embraced Christianity. However, his parents eventually discovered his newfound faith and were furious. Benjamin's father beat his young son to the point where he lost consciousness. Even after that point, he continued stepping on his son's head, affecting Benjamin's eyesight.

Thankfully, Benjamin is now in the care of a local pastor who is providing him with a safe place to live. ICC covered the cost of Benjamin's medical expenses to correct his eye deformity as well as the medicine he will need afterwards. We also provided him with clothing, bedding, and food to alleviate some of the expenses on the shoulders of his host family.

By God's grace, we pray that Benjamin would be healed from this injury and that he would see how the global church helped him during his time of need. While we can't erase the painful memories of his abuse, it is our hope that we can assist him on his road to healing.



TAXI BUSINESS FOR CHRISTIAN CONVERT

In 2019, Hassan converted to Christianity after a church set up a book tent in the local square. Despite receiving threats from his fundamentalist Muslim family, Hassan sought to share the good news by distributing Bibles in his community. He was beaten for his outreach efforts and Hassan's uncle repeatedly swore to kill him if he didn't return to Islam. Hassan was forced to flee his family home due to the threats and ended up living on the streets.

With the assistance of ICC, he secured a new place to live, but he needed a source of income in order to cover his living expenses. ICC provided Hassan with a vehicle and helped him obtain a driver's license so that he could start up his own taxi business. With this business support, Hassan will be able to financially support himself as he navigates his newfound faith without fear.

HOUSING AID FOR CONVERTED REFUGEE

When ISIS took over the Iraqi city of Mosul in 2014, Ammar's life was changed forever. Once a practicing Muslim, he began to question his faith when he saw an ISIS militant execute a man accused of cursing the prophet Mohammed. Though it was punishable by death, Ammar began following a Christian broadcast program and studying the Bible in secret.

Over time, Ammar and his two boys wound up in a refugee camp. However, his living situation in the camp proved even more dangerous. With tens of thousands of people living in close quarters, it was impossible for Ammar to know who he could trust and who sympathized with ISIS. After careful vetting to confirm that Ammar was indeed a believer himself, ICC helped relocate him and his family and provided them with utility costs, clothing and furniture.



FRONT LINES OF MINISTRY

PASTOR PROFILE



AT HOME WITH GOD

ICC provides emergency food packages for Christians fleeing persecution.

By Gina Goh

More than a year after the Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) staged a coup to topple the democratically elected government, Myanmar continues to see intense fighting throughout the nation, especially in Christian-majority areas such as Chin and Kayah states. ICC spoke with Pastor David*, who serves as a pastor at one of the prominent churches in Kayah's Demoso, to learn about his ministry amid ongoing attacks.

As pastors, David said they have to take care of the IDPs' (internally displaced persons) physical and spiritual needs. They also need

to fundraise for resources and amenities for their sheep. All the church pastors are still serving their congregations while they are displaced and meeting the needs of those around them. "As for our church, we manage to gather once a month for worship service, once for youth and Sunday school for Bible study," he said.

During the rest of the month, the Christians are encouraged to worship wherever they are. Certainly, as IDPs, they hope to return to their home. In this kind of crisis, not to get depressed or disappointed is very vital. "Because some members of our

congregation do not have a home to return to, and some have lost their family members, even the most fortunate ones would be returning to their empty and ransacked houses. We always have to encourage them and remind them that 'Our Lord is the God of hope. As long as we have Him, we do not lose our home,'" he added.

He told ICC that there are 56 churches in their mission association, yet most of the churches are temporarily internally displaced when the fighting escalated in their areas. They could only return when the situation improves. The congregations of 10 churches



in Demoso, Ngwe Taung, and Kwe Kho Palaw have been living as internally displaced persons for over a year. They often seek refuge with the other churches from the same mission association, and some displaced have to live with their relatives. ✝

OPPOSITE: Our Lady, Queen of Peace Church in Doungankha village of Demoso township was hit by the junta's artillery fire on June 6, 2021.

TOP: IDP (internally displaced persons) women in Demoso prepare meals in harsh conditions.

BOTTOM: A group of IDP children in an unspecified camp in Demoso.

Before



After





HOPE HOUSE CHILD SPONSOR

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF POVERTY AND PERSECUTION

God's Presence on a Young Soul

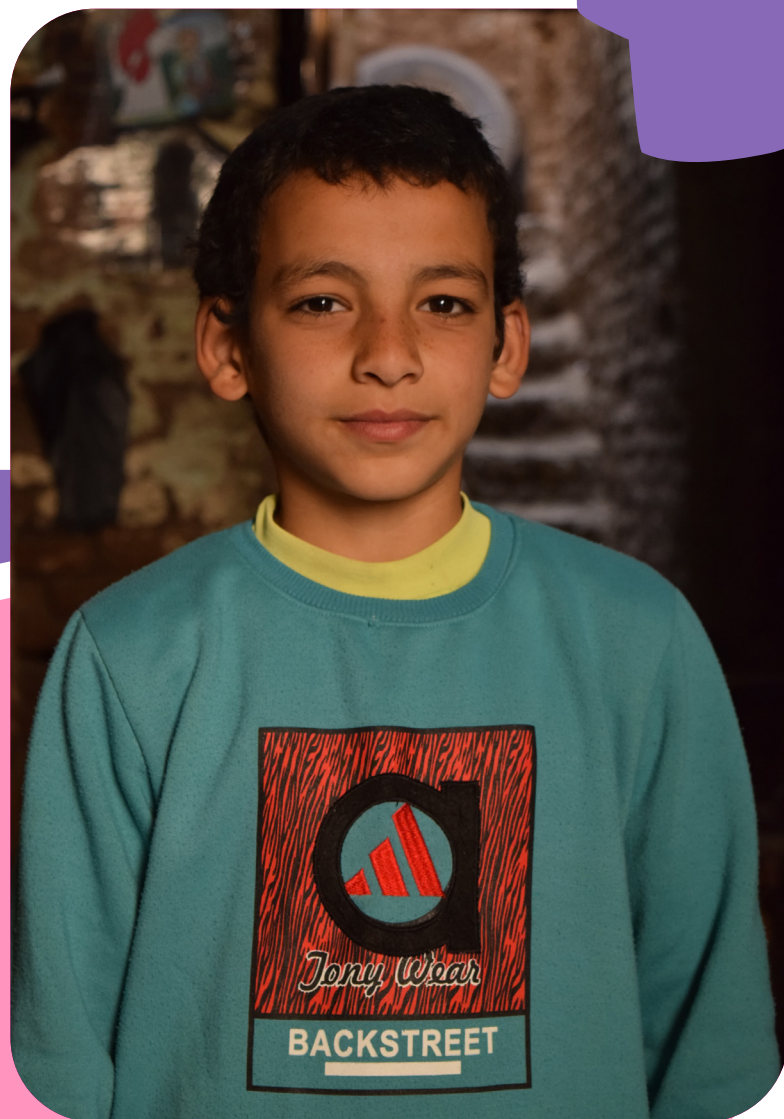
Ebram is the eldest of three children born to an Egyptian Christian couple in Minya Governorate. As a result, it is Ebram's responsibility to assist his father with his chicken trading business.

In order to keep the Christian children in school and not be pulled away by the familial needs, ICC partners with the local church in Ebram's village to offer education classes and supplemental support at the Hope House center.

He shared with his Hope House mentor, "When I wake up, I go to get the car for my father to work on, then I go to school. After school I help my father in distributing the chicks and then I go to my lessons. On the weekend, I go to buy the bread and feed the chicks and livestock."

His mother commented on Ebram's academic and personal development saying, "His level is average, and his sister helps him to study his lessons. He was naughty, but these days he is calm and helps us at home and at work with his father." Ebram's teachers and mentors have poured into him over the last few months of his participation in the center, allowing him to deepen his academic and spiritual knowledge.

Ebram expanded on what he has learned in the discipleship program. "I learned through topics and stories. I



love the story of Noah when he was calling people to enter the ark and people refused, and our Lord descended a flood and people died and Noah lived with his wife and children because he heard the words of our Lord." He has grown in his trust of God and rejoicing at the ways that he sees God's hand at work in his life. "One day I was hoping to fix the cart's wheel and I didn't have money to fix it. God sent someone and told me come work with me, I worked and I had money and I fixed the wheel and I felt that God hears me."

Academically, Ebram has grown significantly in the past year, though he still needs continued support. "The subject that I like most is the Arabic language, but I don't like its grammar because I don't know the syntax. A difficult subject is the English language because there are words that I do not know how to say it."

As is the case for many eldest males in poor, Egyptian Christian families, Ebram often feels the pull to lay aside his education and work to provide for his family. ICC's Hope House and child sponsorship program offer quality education and incentives like food programs in order to keep children in school to help break the cycle of poverty and discrimination that Christians face.

Partner with ICC

Would you consider partnering with ICC to help fight generational persecution that Christians in Egypt face?

To learn more about ICC's Hope House or provide a financial gift, please visit www.persecution.org/initiatives/hope-house/. To inquire about sponsoring a child, contact ICC at icc@persecution.org.

MUSLIM BACKGROUND BELIEVERS

Q&A

Everything you need to know about Muslims who decide to follow Jesus and why it can cost them everything.

By Claire Evans

What are MBBs?

MBB is an acronym meaning Muslim Background Believer and it means that the individual was raised in a Muslim family and has since become a Christian.



Why are MBBs vulnerable to persecution?

The Quran and Hadith (holy books of Islam) command that converts should be killed.

MBBs typically face persecution from their social and family communities, which are typically more tightly knit together than western societies. For example, families often function as part of a larger tribe, which offers members in good standing opportunities for income and protection. As a result, when a Muslim converts to Christianity, they are risking their entire social structure. Not only that, tribes can control large swaths of territory, and effectively making it impossible for the MBB to live in large geographical areas.

The governments of Islamic-majority countries are built upon a constitution that recognizes Islam as the official religion. Thus conversion is often viewed as a national security issue, and MBBs can face these kinds of charges from the authorities.

Typically, if the country has a strong tribal presence, the government is not strong and thus is not the top persecutor of MBBs. But because the government is not strong, the MBBs are not protected from the tribe. On the other hand, governments with a strong presence do not usually have the same kind of tribal issue, but even if the families support the MBB's conversion, they cannot stop the government from pressing charges.

Many Christians do not trust MBBs, making it hard for them to integrate into a church community. Muslim Background Believers can face persecution for simply talking to another Muslim about Christianity, and MBBs gathering in a church can make the church a target for future attacks. This often makes the Christian community keep some or complete distance from MBBs.

What forms of persecution do MBBs face?

Social ostracization: MBBs can be completely cut off from all employment and education opportunities

Jail based on national security related charges: These charges can be levied based on activities ranging from discussing Israel in the Bible, to sharing the Gospel with a friend, to speaking about the Bible in the wrong language.

Tribal death letters: Tribes may issue this kind of letter saying that anyone who finds person XX may kill that person because they converted to Christianity and guarantees that the tribe will not retaliate

for that death because that person is no longer in good standing.

Kidnappings: The wife of the MBB may be kidnapped from him on the basis of his conversion and held hostage until he returns back to Islam. If he does not, then she will be married to someone else.

Forever Muslim: Even if the MBB can get to a place of safety and live openly as a Christian, the kids will forever be Muslim on paper. Which means the kids will be required to attend Islamic classes and also face persecution as an adult. The kids will never be recognized as Christian.



What has ICC done to assist MBBs around the world?

ICC's flagship MBB Relocation program relocates those who have been marked by the tribe and puts them into a different geographical space that is not under the tribe's control. We place them in a safe house, get them language and vocational

training, help them open a livelihood, provide medical care, and essentially rebuild their lives from scratch. Most MBBs are supported for at least 6 months, with the more severe cases receiving support for a year.

Why is it so important to care for MBBs?

Sharing the gospel is a fairly easy thing. Helping those who hear the gospel but who are completely isolated from the church while they are facing the most severe type of persecution is the hardest kind of project that ICC can pursue. Just to be connected somehow to one person who is running from a death threat is dangerous enough, but imagine doing that ten-fold.

This kind of work is not for the faint of heart and requires much skill, which is why so many MBBs are left alone to wrestle with these kinds of problems. By standing alongside MBBs, ICC is not only helping the most vulnerable to persecution, but also installing a sense of confidence by allowing the MBBs to see the Gospel in action firsthand.



OPPOSITE: MBB Iraqi family who received relief and a livelihood project. TOP: One of the MBB women (and single mom) ICC served in Iraq. BOTTOM: Bibles for MBBs in Egypt (2019 project)



GOD GAVE HIM BREATH

A Muslim family was radically saved after a mother's desperate plea to Jesus to save her dead son.

By Claire Evans

Bassam and Marina were married as young teenagers and soon had five children. They love each other, but they regret the circumstances surrounding their arranged marriage. In Iraq's tribal areas, arranged marriages between children are common practice. It reinforces a tribal system which provides communal protection for extended families.

Tribal Constructs

Having a family at such a young age brought extra responsibilities for Bassam. During the day, he worked as a taxi driver. At night, he attended Islamic seminary and studied to become an imam. It was a life, but not a happy one. Frustration mounted within Bassam. In class, the Islamic teachings seemed illogical, and the imams were unable to answer his questions. Out of curiosity, he explored Christianity, but concluded that God was not real. He was in a dark place with nowhere to turn.

Then, a miracle happened.

During a social gathering, their eldest son stopped breathing. Marina noticed, but strict Islamic rules kept her silent. She explained, "One day, my son was suffocating. In our tradition, we (women) can't enter a room while other men are there. After 10 minutes, I started knocking on the door so that my husband could come and help."

By then it was too late. Their son was dead. "At this point, I remembered the Christ that I read about. I started calling out to Him – that if Christ was there, then bring my son back. I can't forget the smile of my son immediately when he got his life back," Bassam remembers, recalling the moment when he thought his son was dead, but then he came back to life.

After witnessing this miracle, the family immediately converted to Christianity; but, there was one problem: the tribe. Bassam's mother knew of the conversion and asked others to pray for his repentance. News of his apostasy spread. Marina's father tried to take away the children. A driver stopped Bassam on the street and threatened him with death. That was the day they fled their home.

Starting Over

For the next year, ICC walked alongside Bassam and Marina as they attempted to rebuild their lives. "I think these kinds of projects are the most worthwhile," said our field team. Persecution has almost decimated the Christian presence in Iraq, and support for the convert community is essential for rebuilding Christianity.

Since Bassam was an experienced taxi driver, ICC facilitated the purchase of a vehicle for him. While Bassam worked on developing a client list, ICC helped the family move into a safer home and covered the initial moving expenses. At the end of six months, their lives were totally transformed.



"Thank you for the help. It changed everything within a few weeks," Bassam said. "Having this taxi is like a dream come true. We prayed to God, but the answer exceeded our expectations. I wasn't prepared for such [a] big blessing."

When new converts flee their homes, they lose everything. Bassam's new business didn't just provide a source of income for the family or a way out of poverty; it gave him purpose.

"The most positive thing is that I am the owner. I have dignity while I am working... My practical life changed 180 degrees," Bassam continued. "When you met me for the first time, I used to buy used clothes, but now I am able to buy new clothes. Also, if I

had bought shoes for my oldest daughter, then I had to wait for the next month to buy for my other kid. Now, I am able to buy for two of them, and sometimes three of them, at once."

"I have paid back half of my debts... I am happy to be able to achieve that with your help," Bassam added. "Please pass my appreciation to whoever helped me."

The disarray caused by persecution should have left Bassam's family in perpetual ruin, with no hope. But by standing alongside the family, their lives were completely rebuilt. They emerged victorious and serve as an inspiration to other MBBs who also trust in God's goodness for the future. ✝

SHOE SELLER GAINS WHEELS FOR CHRIST

ICC helped a disabled MBB by providing a wheelchair.

By Claire Evans

A cloud of dust swirls around the feet of a man who would otherwise remain unnoticed. Pairs of shoes waiting for customers neatly line the ground in front of him, an ironic trade for a man whose disability leaves him incapacitated. Walk further around the market and the plight of the disabled becomes more evident: those who cannot walk, drag themselves across the ground, begging for whatever coin might be spared by passing strangers. The Middle East is not a kind region to the disabled. Neither is it a kind region to Christians, especially converts.

The shoe seller is named Amar and he has been unable to walk since he was only 9 years old. Now he is 46, and the memories of living a normal life seem so far away. Perhaps it was those memories which gave him space to consider different religious ideas. He shared with ICC, “I like fishing. Before 2003, I used to spend a long time at the lake, where I met someone who later became a friend. His name was Saman, and he was a faithful Christian who I respected very much. Saman left after 2003. I wish I can reconnect with him to tell him that I became a Christian. He didn’t tell me a lot about Christianity, but he was faithful.”

Satellite TV and internet did not become available in Amar’s home country until after 2003, and it



was at that point he began learning about what Christianity means. This was during the height of war within his country, and many Christians were leaving as a result of the conflict. His city already did not have many Christians living there, as it is considered an Islamic holy site, but this further isolated him from communication with other believers. Nevertheless, Amar made a commitment to Christ, keeping this decision largely a secret for his own protection.

More recently, Amar was finally able to get connected to a Christian pastor, who has provided discipleship opportunities. Amar has taken small steps to live his Christian faith more boldly, but that comes with serious challenges, and his disability only increases his vulnerability. Pointing to his necklace, he shared with ICC how “I am happy with this gift. I was wearing its cross one day, and some militia member came and it took it off my neck. He threatened to murder me if I did it again. I don’t know reading and writing, but I am in direct touch with the pastor, and he is teaching me how to be disciple of Christ.”

Given Amar’s disability, these types of threats were even more potent as he could not easily escape anyone who might threaten him with violence. For this reason, ICC’s field team decided that it would be wise to purchase Amar a wheelchair so that he could have increased mobility. Given security issues surrounding his hometown, ICC brought Ali to another city so that we could shop together for a wheelchair. The pastor shared how, “we discovered that there are sizes of wheelchairs, that was another reason for bringing Amar to another city instead of buying a wheelchair and sending it to him. I wanted to make sure the wheelchair was a comfortable fit.”

The wheelchair changed Amar’s quality of life substantially. It gave him increased mobility, allowing him to sell more shoes, it also allowed him greater independence from his family. Amar hopes that it will also allow him to become better connected to other secret Christians. “Please pray for me to be able keeping my simple job, selling shoes and also pray for having a prayer group of MBBs.”

OPPOSITE: Amar was severely disabled while a young child.
TOP: ICC helped Amar find a wheelchair for him, increasing his mobility and independence.
BOTTOM: Amar was threatened with murder by a militia member who saw him wearing a cross.

HEALING THROUGH ART

Thanks to ICC, a young Christian convert is offered a second opportunity to heal through his God-given talents.

By Kate Piscelli

Hamza grew up in Uganda as a devout Muslim. But in 2018, he traveled to Kenya for work, where he was assigned to stay with a Christian believer. It was during this trip that he accepted Jesus as his Savior.

Hamza, 24, recalls that immediately after hearing the gospel, he wanted to know more about the Christian faith.

"I was not yet content with what I had been told," he said. "I bought a Bible to know more deeply about what I was told, and I joined discipleship classes until I was convinced to truly give my life to Christ."

After three months working and learning the Christian faith, Hamza returned home to his family in Uganda. However, he kept his new identity a secret from his parents, for fear of their reaction. In Uganda, those who convert from Islam are often cut off from their families and communities. Many Muslim societies believe that apostates should receive the death penalty, as required under their strict interpretation of Sharia law.



Despite this danger, Hamza knew that he had to tell his family the truth. Their response was one of disappointment and concern, and they tried to get their son to return to the Islamic faith.

Two weeks after Hamza returned home, his mother became terribly sick and died. Hamza was blamed for her death, as his family concluded that it was due to his Christian conversion.

"I suffered from physiological torture and threats from relatives throughout the burial process," he said.



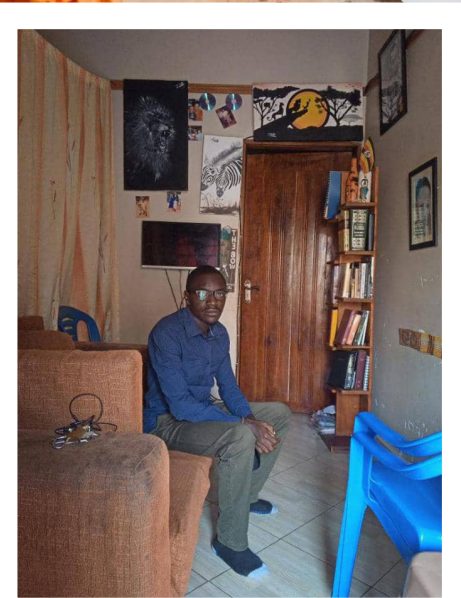
Hamza decided to leave home, and in 2019 was able to rent his own apartment in a different town. Soon, his sister and younger brother also received Christ, and came to live with him to escape the threats at home.

Today, Hamza earns a living by doing his passion, art. While he has clients that buy his paintings, his business has been stagnant due to his inability to afford proper art supplies. Hamza desired to own an art studio, where he could showcase his work and fulfill the potential of his God-given gift.

When International Christian Concern learned of Hamza's story, our representative in Uganda visited him to put together a plan. About a month later, he was given his very own studio, furnished and filled with the items and art supplies he desired.

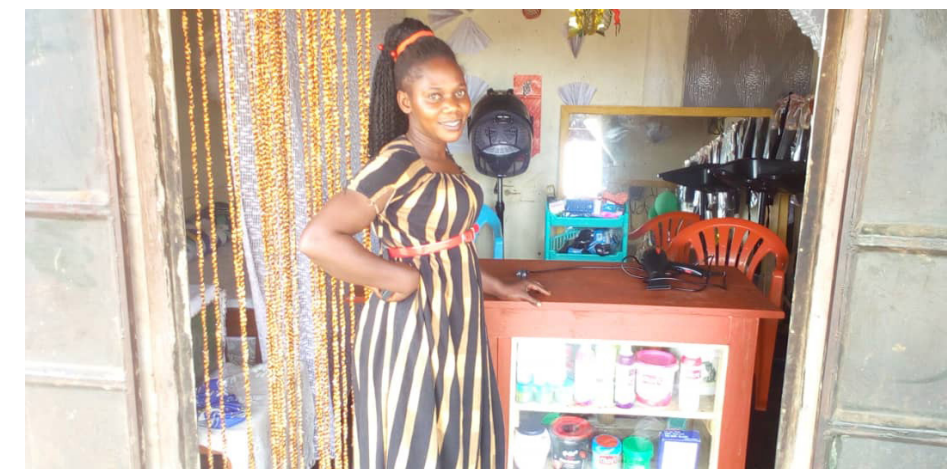
Hamza could hardly believe his eyes.

"All I can say is, thank you for healing the pain I have carried since I gave my life to Jesus Christ," he said. "May the good Lord bless everyone who is behind the fulfillment of my desire." ✝



"THANK YOU FOR HEALING THE PAIN I HAVE CARRIED SINCE I GAVE MY LIFE TO JESUS CHRIST."

- Hamza thanking ICC



REVIVAL IN THE SEAT OF A HAIR SALON

ICC helps a Christian convert set up shop in Uganda.

By Kate Piscelli

It's no secret that a Muslim who converts to Christianity in Uganda faces extreme danger. As they come to Christ, Muslim-background believers (MBBs) often lose relationships, security, safety, and other worldly comforts. This was the case for Nalubega Janat, who gave up everything to be a Christian after having her first child.

Janat converted to Christianity in 2014, and her family immediately disowned her. Still, she continued in her new faith, along with her husband, with whom she had two more children. However, years into their marriage, her husband became abusive.

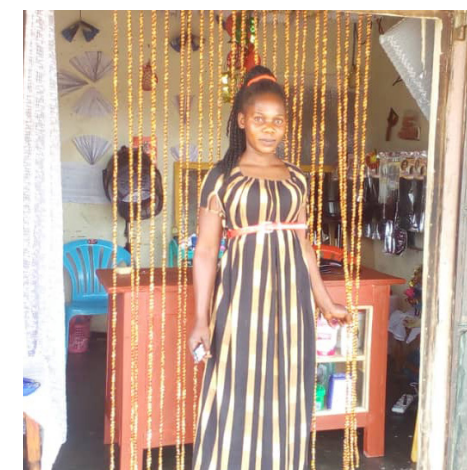
Unable to return home to her family without converting back to Islam, Janat was forced to take her children and flee the abuse, with nowhere to turn for help. Thankfully, she eventually found a temporary place to stay. But time was running out, and she needed to find a way to earn an income to sustain her family.

In October of 2021, ICC heard of Janat's story, and visited the village where she was staying. During a meeting with her and her Pastor, Janet informed ICC that before having children she had taken courses to become a hairdresser. She had always dreamed of

working in a salon, but never imagined she would be given such an opportunity.

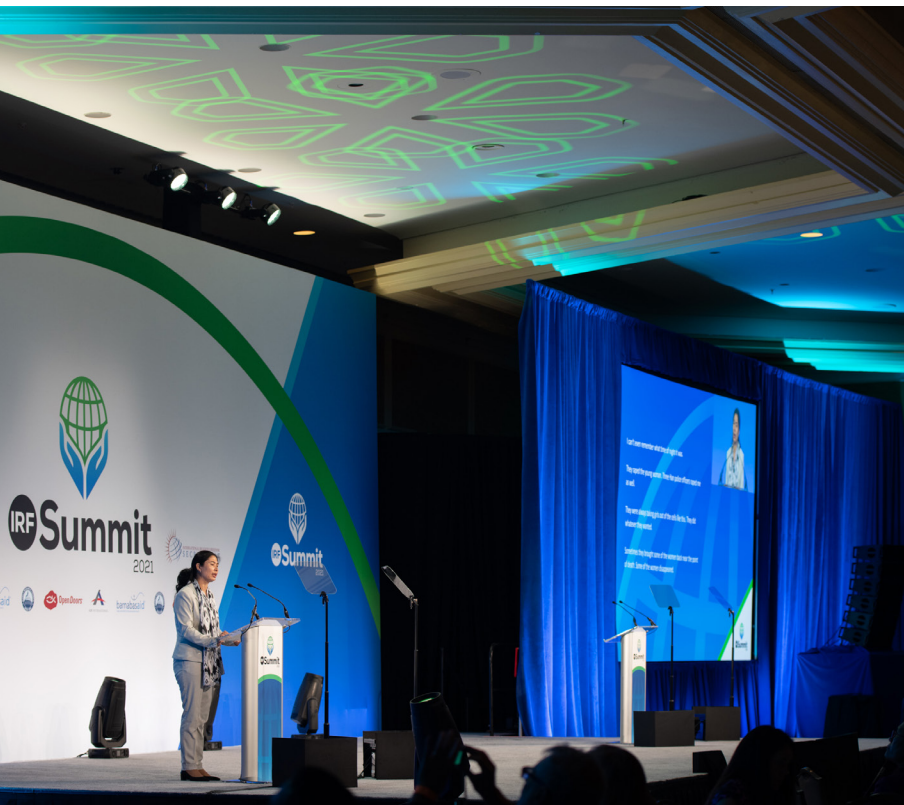
Two months later, ICC returned to Janat's village with the news that she could have her very own shop. Janat was taken to buy all of the necessary supplies for her store, including a sink, hair products, mirrors, extensions, braiding tools, a television, standing driers and more.

With boxes of supplies filling the car, Janat was then brought to her shop which had four months of rent pre-paid. She was also given additional capital to get her business



off the ground. While ICC staff helped Janat set up her store, other volunteers joined and helped unload boxes. She even received her first customer that day.

Janat could hardly express her joy as she marveled at what Jesus had done for her. Through tears, she told ICC that she was going to use the salon to spread the Gospel, and tell all of her customers how Christ cared for her in her darkest moments. ✝



Second Annual IRF Summit Convening in D.C. Later this Month

After a very successful first gathering in 2021, the IRF Summit is being convened again this year from June 28-30, 2022 and is expected to gather religious freedom advocates from around the world in Washington, D.C. for three days of lectures, expert analysis, and networking. The IRF Summit is the premier civil society event for international religious freedom anywhere in the world and attracts groups both large and small representing every major faith group around the world.

Once again, ICC is helping to lead the speaker-selection process for the Summit as Chair of the Programming Committee. Other major partners of the Summit include the IRF Secretariat, OpenDoors USA, Samaritan's Purse, ADF International, and the Global Peace Foundation.

The Summit aims to promote "religious freedom for everyone, everywhere, all the time" in the words of Ambassador Sam Brownback, a founding member of the Summit and a leading voice on the topic of religious freedom. During the Summit, ICC will release its highly anticipated 2022 Persecutor

of the Year Awards report. The comprehensive findings will name the top Christian oppressors in three categories: Country, Entity, and Individual.

"At present," the IRF Summit website reads, "almost 80 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries where there are high levels of governmental or societal restrictions on religion. ... Together [the Summit] will gain political support for the global religious freedom movement and embolden civil society, people of faith, and governments to take a stand for religious freedom."

ICC is excited to be part of organizing such an important gathering. "Great things can happen when people gather, in good faith, to dialogue about religious freedom" said Matias Perttula, ICC's Director of Advocacy. "The worldwide push to advance religious freedom is still growing, and gatherings like the Summit are a vital part of keeping that momentum going. I hope that much fruit comes from the Summit and that the energy and passion each attendee brings to the event creates real change for the persecuted all around the world."



PERSECUTION IN THE WEST?

West Watch seeks to share with you glimpses of issues involving Christianity in the Western world.

So often, ICC's content focuses on where we see persecution in its most extreme forms—murder, rape, torture, and imprisonment. Those who experience and endure these forms of persecution will always be at the forefront of our ministry mission.

However, ICC stands for religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. When we see religious freedom being violated, especially in the "free world," we call it out.

West Watch highlights some of the issues ICC's advocacy team spots in Europe and North America—places where persecution of religious groups doesn't make headlines.



STAFF COLUMN

HOMELESS AND LIVING ON THE EDGE OF DEATH

Displaced and facing death from Fulani extremists, Christians living with targets on their backs share their horrific realities with ICC's Regional Manager.

Story and Photos by Kate Piscelli

The Benue River runs directly through Makurdi, slicing through the state and cultivating the richest soils in all of Nigeria. Basketfuls of colorful crops line the city streets, supplemented by hanging rows of raw meat and the fishermen's catch of the day. While driving past the marketplaces and marveling at the natural resources available, I easily understood why locals fondly refer to Benue as "the breadbasket of Nigeria." Inconceivable, though, is what you will find just a few miles down the road.

In a camp for internally displaced peoples (IDPs), only a 10-minute drive from the center of town, are hundreds of people forced into lives of obscurity. Women who once reaped bountiful harvests now trade sex for a meal to bring home to their families. Children who otherwise would have been able to attend school now wander idle with their bellies swollen from malnourishment, or so emaciated their skeletons show through their skin. In a state so blessed to be called Nigeria's breadbasket, there are over 1 million IDPs struggling to survive each day.

These are the same people, who just years prior were living lives of peace and comfort. Lives taken from them in an instant when Fulani militants stormed their communities, killed their family members, and burned down their homes all in the name of their God.



I spoke with Mary, a woman seemingly in her 20's, whose English revealed years of education.

"I've been here for 5 years now," she told me, her eyes fixed on the red dirt beneath us. "One day we were asleep at our homes, and we heard shooting, but we didn't know the problem that started it. There were more than 50 of them, carrying guns and cut glass." She paused, then continued, still looking at the ground.

"They killed my brother and his wife that day," she said, as she looked out and motioned toward the sea of tents. "Now we are living here, we don't have a clinic or healthcare, or anything to eat. My prayer is for you to help us to go back to our home."

As Mary spoke a crowd gathered, and when she finished, others took their turn to tell their stories, each more devastating than the last. When it was time to leave, we joined together in prayer, and said our goodbyes. While we left full of good intentions, hoping to effectively relay their message back home, deep down we wondered if anything would really make a difference.

Our van started forward to exit the camp, and I turned around to see the crowd waving goodbye. Just then, I noticed a woman emerge from the group. Is she running after us? We continued driving, and she began to slow down, eventually turning back to the crowd in exhaustion.

They motioned her forward, as if telling her not to give up. Once again, she continued to run. Yes, she's running after us. We asked the driver to stop, and we got out and began running to meet her. When we did, she reached behind her back and handed me a child who I hadn't previously seen, tied around her in a swaddling scarf.

He was skin and bones. Never had I held something so delicate. With one wrong move, I felt that he would break in my arms. He clung to me, not making a noise. He couldn't have been more than 10 pounds. Later I would find out he was almost four years old.

Thankfully, this child was brought to a hospital that day and nourished back to health. But for millions of IDPs across Nigeria, this story rarely has a happy ending. Having been driven from their ancestral farmlands due to Fulani Militant attacks, they have become visitors in their own country.

A four-year-old child, starving to death, in Nigeria's Breadbasket. I wondered how many more there could be. 



A Mother's Prison Assignment

By Jeff King, ICC President

I was told about “Ruth” years ago when I was working with the families of imprisoned Christians in China.

Ruth was involved in the underground printing of Christian books and Bibles. This was incredibly important work. So important that the government searched diligently for the source of those printed materials. They swam upstream and eventually made their way to Ruth.

Ruth was arrested and sentenced to several years in prison, but she was determined to use her prison time for God – and boy, did she!

We received reports from believers imprisoned with her about Ruth's ministry in the prison. They said Ruth would beam with constant joy in a situation that would break most people. That joy opened the hearts of her fellow prisoners. She was constantly sharing the Gospel and bringing others to Christ.

In her one to two years in prison, she composed over 30 Christian songs, which she then taught to those around her.

A released fellow inmate said she had only seen Ruth unhappy three times in two years.

That's all pretty incredible, but there's more to the story.

When Ruth was sentenced, she was the mother of a toddler. But she said to the Lord, “If my assignment is prison, I will go and minister there.” Her husband had to care for

their son alone. He wasn't angered or upset about it, though. He said, “Compared to what Christians have suffered throughout history, we consider this almost nothing. If you want to work for God, this is quite reasonable.”

This is another example of how the persecuted Church is a gift to the “free” Church. It is like a mirror held up to our face. We look and say, “If that is a Christian, then what am I?” This is part of why we serve this amazing group of believers around the world.

If you are like me, you're struck to the core by Ruth's example. I am not like Ruth. My “spiritual gift” tends to be grumbling. I feel sorry for myself at the slightest discomfort.

But they are dedicated, selfless, and full of love and joy. They point the way we should go and the way we should live. They have abandoned the world and are “all-in” for God.

Oh, what a lesson to us in the free Church, where we have been captured by busyness and the tyranny of the urgent, where our goals have become so underwhelming, like making our churches “popular” and full of people rather than full of the Holy Spirit's presence.

We desperately need their example. We all need to be Ruths. 

This was an excerpt from Jeff King's upcoming devotional book focused on spiritual lessons from the persecuted. For information about pre-orders, please contact moreinfo@persecution.org.

BY FAITH ABRAHAM OBEYED WHEN GOD TOLD HIM TO GO TO ANOTHER LAND WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE HE WAS GOING. BY FAITH MOSES CHOSE OPPRESSION RATHER THAN ENJOYING EGYPT'S FLEETING PLEASURES.

HE THOUGHT IT BETTER TO SUFFER FOR CHRIST THAN TO ENJOY THE TREASURES OF EGYPT. OTHERS WERE TORTURED, REFUSING TO TURN FROM GOD IN ORDER TO BE SET FREE.

THEY PLACED THEIR HOPE IN A BETTER LIFE AFTER THE RESURRECTION.

Hebrews 11:8, 24-26, 35 (paraphrased)



JUNE WEEKLY PRAYERS

Take one week this month to pray for the persecuted.

SUNDAY

Pray for the safety of Muslims who turn to Christ.

MONDAY

Pray for businesses started by MBBs who are starting over.

TUESDAY

Pray for the congregations displaced by the Burmese army.

WEDNESDAY

Pray for Hope House's unsponsored children that they would receive sponsorships.

THURSDAY

Pray for the strength of new believers' faith, especially those in the Middle East.

FRIDAY

Pray for provision for children in Nigeria's middle belt who are starving to death.

SATURDAY

Pray for the safety and ministry of international staff at ICC who are working in the harvest.

To download our monthly prayer calendar, visit www.persecution.org/take-action/prayer-calendar.



YOU CAN HELP TODAY!

OUTREACH TO MBBs

**WOULD YOU
CONSIDER GIVING?**

- \$5:** Child's toy
- \$30:** 3-day food supply
- \$50:** one night in a safe house
- \$100:** medical treatment
- \$250:** Kid's expenses (education, milk, diapers)
- \$500:** One-month safe house rent
- \$800:** New IDs for a family
- \$5,000:** Delivery vehicle for livelihood



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We urgently need to raise **\$500,000** to care for the 100 Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) we have already rescued and to hide those waiting their turn.

Thank you for partnering with us in rescuing these precious ones willing to risk everything for Jesus.

This is Holy work, and we are privileged to do it, but we are merely your hands and feet. Join us as we serve our brothers and sisters on their dangerous journey.

Please visit www.persecution.org/MBB to donate.

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WWW.PERSECUTION.ORG

OR BY PHONE
800-ICC-5441

GIVING VIA WILL

Provide now for a future gift to ICC by including a bequest provision in your will or revocable trust. If you would like more information on giving to ICC in this way, please give us a call at 1-800-ICC-5441

PERSECUTION.ORG

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OUR MISSION: Since 1996, ICC has served the global persecuted church through a three-pronged approach of advocacy, awareness, and assistance. ICC exists to bandage the wounds of persecuted Christians and to build the church in the toughest parts of the world.

DONATIONS: International Christian Concern (ICC) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) (all donations tax-deductible). ICC makes every effort to honor donor wishes in regards to their gifts. Occasionally, a situation will arise where a project is no longer viable. ICC will redirect those donated funds to one of our other funds that is most similar to the donor's original wishes.

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