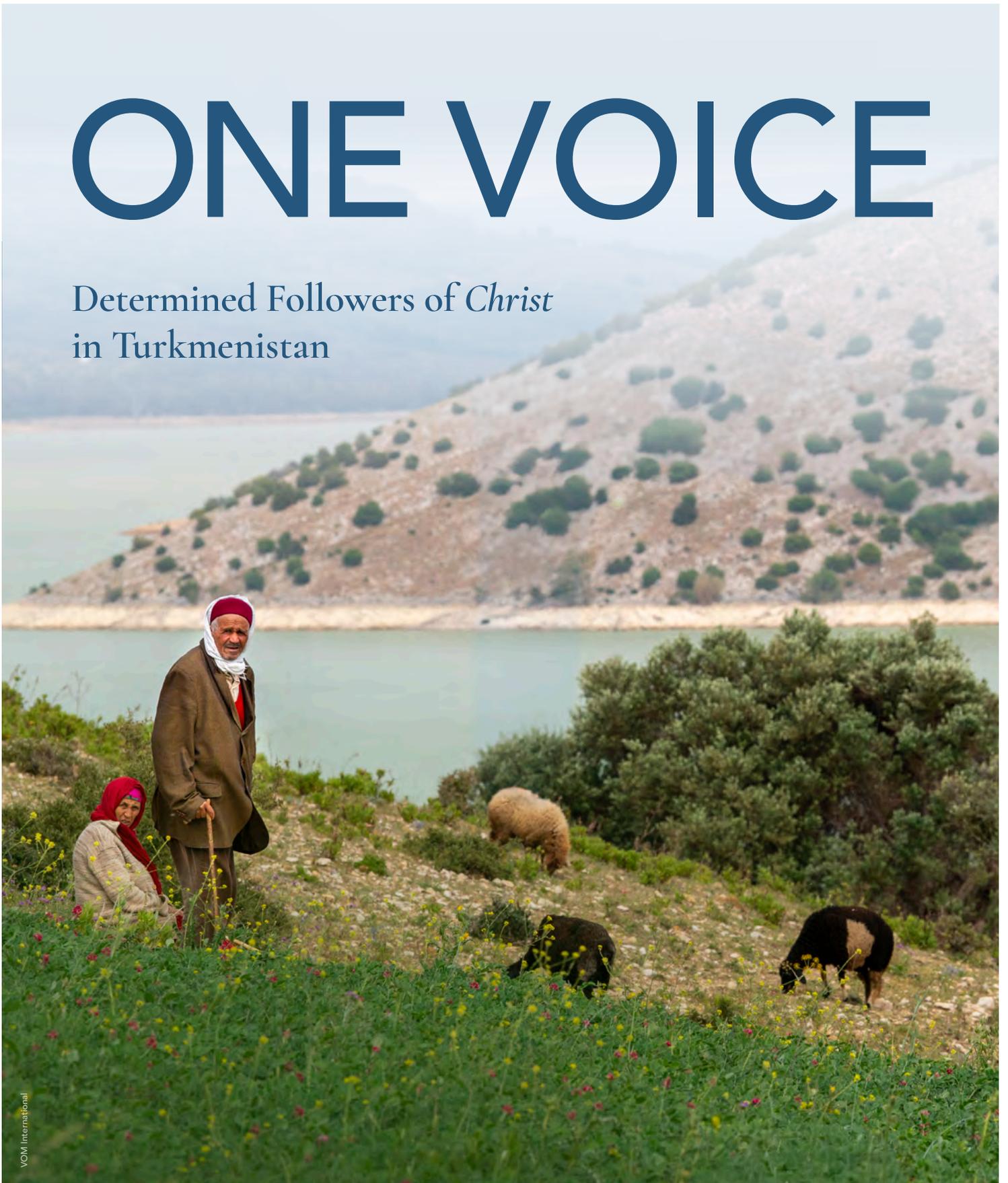


ONE VOICE

Determined Followers of *Christ*
in Turkmenistan



VOM International

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VOMC
Voice of the Martyrs Canada

ONE BODY. ONE VOICE.

Followers of Christ in Turkmenistan

By Floyd A. Brobbel
CEO for Voice of the Martyrs Canada



*“Cast all your anxiety on Him
because He cares for you.”*

1 Peter 5:7 NIVUK

Turkmenistan is a highly restrictive country in Central Asia where approximately 94 percent of the population are Sunni Muslims, while only about four percent are followers of Jesus. As the nation’s regime exercises strict control over religious activities, Christian worship is mainly limited to a few government-approved churches. This makes it extremely difficult for denominations that are not sanctioned by the state to operate freely.

Christians who gather for worship or prayer in private are often subjected to police raids and harassment. As a result, those participating in house church services have suffered physical beatings, fines, salary reductions, and/or the seizure of their personal properties and businesses. Authorities have also warned Christian parents that their children will be closely monitored at school. Additionally, whenever believers attempt to travel abroad for ministry training or fellowship, they frequently encounter difficulties with customs authorities.

First Peter 5:7 was addressing believers who were facing challenges in a similarly hostile context. Early Christians endured opposition from a culture that was threatened by the church’s potential to become a powerful and influential

force in society. As persecution arose in response to the budding Christian faith, many new followers of Christ found themselves disheartened and unsure of how to persevere.

The Apostle Peter, who had been transformed by his times with Jesus, reached out to these believers with encouragement. He urged them to remain steadfast in their faith and to cast all their anxieties onto God, who promised to never forsake them during their trials. The early church leader also reminded these suffering members that, although they could expect persecution in this life, the hope of every Christian rests in the assurance of Christ's imminent return; a time when He will duly reward His faithful followers. Until then, the Holy Spirit dwells within the hearts of His people, providing guidance for their earthly journeys and comfort amid their struggles.

Despite the restrictions imposed on Turkmen Christians, the Gospel continues to advance through the powerful witness of their personal testimonies and the broadcasting of ministry programs via various media outlets. When believers truly cast their troubles onto the Lord, ministry begins to flow from pure hearts that desire to uncompromisingly honour and please Him in all things.

In this month's issue of *One Voice*, we invite readers to reflect on the challenges facing church members in Turkmenistan. Amid significant opposition, these resilient individuals demonstrate remarkable strength. They long to gather freely for meaningful times of worship, Bible study and fellowship – practices that serve to encourage them. Yet, even under the threat of fines, imprisonment, and various other restrictions, the church in Turkmenistan continues to press onward. As our Turkmen brothers and sisters in Christ advance God's Kingdom with courage and grace, may their perseverance inspire us to pray fervently, advocate faithfully, and stand unwaveringly with them in solidarity.

Keep looking up,



Voice of the Martyrs

ONE VOICE is one of the primary tools used by Voice of the Martyrs Canada to engage the Canadian Christian community and bring awareness of believers who suffer because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

FOUNDERS

Klaas and Nellie Brobbel
with Pastor Richard Wurmland

Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

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“On Air” in Turkmenistan

Growing up in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, Silas lived in tension between two worlds. At home, his family practised Islam; in school, Communist teachers insisted that God didn't exist at all. Torn between belief and doubt, Silas described himself as an atheist in his head and a Muslim in his heart.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Turkmenistan became an independent country. During that time, Silas' worldview began to unravel. “There was a lot of uncertainty,” he recalls. “People were...restarting every aspect of their lives.” Amid the upheaval, Silas' brother-in-law shared unexpected news: he had converted to Christianity. Silas was shocked. His only exposure to the Christian faith had been through the Russian media, which he associated with oppression. Still, he listened carefully whenever his brother-in-law talked about Jesus. “The person of Christ and the stories about His life...are what really drew me to Him,” Silas says. “I wanted to know more.”

His brother-in-law had a copy of the *JESUS* film, a movie about the life of Christ that's commonly used for evangelism. When Silas watched the film with his wife, Yelena (whose father owned the only VHS player in the village), something shifted in his heart: “The Gospel

became real, not only giving knowledge to my head but [also] by touching my soul.” Overflowing with joy, Silas gave his life to Jesus and began sharing the “Good News” of the Gospel with everyone in his village. As he read aloud from a small Russian-language Bible, many in the community came to faith in Christ. Silas believes these Christians very likely formed the first church in Turkmenistan. “We didn't know how to *do church*,” he admits. “We were all learning at the same time.”

However, not everyone was happy about Silas' evangelistic efforts. Opposing villagers spread rumours that he was a Russian priest, ostracizing him and the other believers, and occasionally also threatening them. Despite this, Silas and his small house church continued to proclaim Christ. “Nobody disciplined us or told us [to evangelize],” he says. “It was purely the Holy Spirit giving us the ‘joy of our salvation’...and we were naturally talking about it.”

Later that year, Silas moved to Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's capital, to study international law. Yelena stayed behind with their two children, and the church in the village kept growing. While studying in Ashgabat, Silas joined a Russian house church where he received water baptism. And although Turkmen-language Bibles were illegal, he was finally able to obtain a printed copy. Studying God's Word

Despite the persecution Silas and Yelena endured in Turkmenistan, they retain their joy in the Lord.



“Nobody disciplined us or told us [to evangelize],” he says. “It was purely the Holy Spirit giving us the ‘joy of our salvation’...and we were naturally talking about it.”

in his own language further equipped him to boldly share the Gospel, even with classmates whose parents were high-ranking Communist officials.

After graduating, Silas served the country’s Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations as a lawyer, but his heart was elsewhere. After one year, he left this job to become a pastor, a decision that resulted in his father disowning him. “The Kingdom work was more important to me,” Silas explains. Dedicated to the call of God on his life, he planted house churches across Ashgabat and witnessed entire families come to faith in Christ. To reach more people, he distributed audio cassettes of the *JESUS* film that were recorded in the Turkmen language. When the authorities eventually learned about Silas’ persistent evangelism and growing house churches, they viewed his evangelistic work as a political movement created by the West to destabilize the country.

One day, police agents raided Silas’ house churches, confiscating numerous Bibles and cassettes. “They came with cameras and started recording us,” Silas recalls. “They were scaring people [and] writing down names, saying, ‘You can’t gather in this setting!’” Silas tried to defend their rights using his legal background, but the authorities forced the believers to sign declarations promising that they would stop attending church.

Silas was subsequently arrested and banned from living in Ashgabat. Even though he was sent back to his village by train, he jumped off after a few stations and returned to the city so he could continue his ministry. Authorities arrested him again – and again – for repeatedly disobeying orders. They also sent informants to infiltrate his congregations. In early 2000, the persecution further escalated. A newspaper published a smear article accusing Silas of betraying his country. When he confronted the author, the man admitted that the authorities had ordered him to write it. A consulting lawyer warned Silas not to fight back. “Do you want your kids and wife to be in a car accident?” he asked. “Be careful.”

That summer, Silas and Yelena were driving with their two young children when a semitrailer coming from the opposite direction suddenly veered towards them. When

FEATURE STORY

Silas swerved to avoid the near collision, his car rolled down a ravine before coming to a stop upside down. Yelena – who was five months pregnant – and one of their children were seriously injured. As the family lay at the scene of the accident, police agents arrived – not to help, but to arrest Silas. “You could see in their faces that they were upset to find us alive,” he adds.

The authorities shoved Silas into a car and sped off, leaving his wounded loved ones stranded in the desert heat. The agents drove for an hour before taking Silas inside a building where they beat and interrogated him for three hours. When they finally drove him back to the accident site, Silas flagged down a passerby who gave the family a ride to Ashgabat: “My wife ended up in the hospital where she lost the baby,” he sadly announces. “I almost lost my wife as well.” Adding to the couple’s heartache, the hospital refused to release the body of their stillborn child for a dignified burial, consequently denying Yelena and Silas needed closure.

Weeks later, Silas was rearrested, beaten, shocked with electricity, suffocated, and deprived of sleep. “It was one of the darkest moments of my life,” he says. “I thought it was

going to be the end.” While the agents tortured Silas, they also tried to get him to doubt his beliefs. Fighting off the pain, Silas responded by sharing the Gospel. One agent told him: “You have a radio/television voice.... You could have been a speaker on national TV, praising our president and living a good life.” Silas was then choked repeatedly for narrating the *JESUS* film. Yet, he noticed the agents quietly taking the confiscated cassettes for themselves. “It was amazing,” he says. “On one hand, they tried to destroy the Kingdom work; on the other hand, they distributed the cassettes among themselves.”

Eventually, after an American diplomat advocated for Silas’ freedom, international pressure led to the Christian leader’s release. Even so, Silas wasn’t truly free. The authorities forcibly evicted the pastor and his family from their house. With nowhere to go, the believers hid elsewhere in the city. While there, they learned that the police had interrogated their relatives and tortured a former neighbour in their attempts to find Silas’ location.

On January 10th, 2001, the pastor and his family fled Turkmenistan under the guise of a three-day border pass. While hiding in a neighbouring country, Silas wrestled with





YOH International

Reflecting on his early days in ministry, Silas says persecution helped him learn to depend on God alone.

guilt for leaving his churches behind. "I love my people," he prayed to the Lord. "I want to serve [them]." Then he remembered Jesus' words in Matthew 10:23: "*When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next.*" Silas sensed God saying, "Just trust Me.... I will open doors that nobody can close."

Thankfully, some Russian pastors provided an apartment for Silas' family. And two months later, a former mafia member helped smuggle the family into Russia. While there, Silas reconnected with a Christian radio worker who invited him to record ministry programs in the Turkmen language. "That was God opening the door," Silas affirms. "Many people were hearing the Gospel through [the broadcasts]."

In November 2001, Silas' family was granted refugee status in Norway where he built a production studio. Over time, his ministry vastly expanded by producing daily video/radio broadcasts and social media outreaches in the Turkmen and Uzbek languages. In addition, his teaching messages have become accessible through special sign language programs and via YouTube, enabling multitudes of people in other countries – such as Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye – to watch the programs as well.

Reflecting on all that has taken place over the years, Silas can now see in retrospect that the Lord had not only remained with him throughout all those times of suffering but was also faithfully working in his heart. "Going through that painful experience...made me realize that my only hope is God," he concludes. Silas also trusts the Lord to continue blessing and multiplying the ministry of the churches in Turkmenistan today through the various teaching broadcasts and social media outreaches that he is producing in the Turkmen language.

PRAYER RESPONSE

Silas requests prayer for members of the underground church in Turkmenistan who take great risks to proclaim the Gospel. He also asks Christians in the West to intercede on behalf of the country's political leaders, praying that they too will hear his radio broadcasts in the Turkmen language and, as a result, come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Equipped for Ministry

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”

Colossians 3:16 NIVUK

In a region where Christian resources are scarce – and believers must often walk their faith journeys in isolation – VOMC has been privileged to collaborate with long-standing ministry partners in support of a unique training event for Central Asian women. Held in Southeast Asia, the five-day gathering welcomed a group of women who are actively serving in Christian ministry – with VOMC directly supporting ten of them. These women came to the event seeking wisdom, spiritual refreshment and a welcomed reprieve from the demands of their daily ministry involvements.

The goal of the training was to equip participants with essential Biblical tools for counselling, spiritual growth and personal healing. The sessions provided helpful information relating to the following aspects of ministry: Biblical Counselling, Fulfilling Your Purpose, Understanding the Heart, Peace-Making & Conflict Resolution, The Importance of Repentance, Recovering from Grief, God’s Design for Marriage, as well as How to Navigate Life Amid Trials and Suffering. Each of the sessions spoke directly to the realities facing believers in Central Asia, where the publishing and

importation of Christian literature are severely restricted. Additionally, as followers of Jesus in Central Asia are viewed by governing officials with suspicion, it is often impossible to receive permission to hold large gatherings or training events within their region. As a result, many Christians find themselves lacking the resources needed to flourish in their faith and ministry. Gatherings like this training event offer a vital lifeline to each participating believer – providing them access to the tools and encouragement they’ve long needed but rarely received.

The conference also offered special opportunities for the women to engage in times of fellowship, personal counselling and emotional restoration. Within this safe environment, they were able to candidly share their personal stories, encourage one another, and receive greatly needed support from those who understand the unique challenges of ministering in their region. The women returned home not only equipped with increased knowledge and newly acquired skills, but also with hearts full of joy. Thanks to the refreshment, fortitude and empowerment they received, each one of them will be



able to continue their work with renewed fervour and a more meaningful relationship with Jesus. Here are a few of the reflections we received:

“This was my first time attending such a meeting, and I am so happy that I was invited. I received so much, and want to share what I learned with as many people as possible. I not only received spiritual food, but also rest here. Thank you so much for this seminar and teachers.”

“I came here hoping to get as much information as possible, and my expectations were completely fulfilled. These topics touched me very much. I felt that all the themes were so relevant – and exactly what I wanted to learn about.”

“This was the first seminar in which I have participated. For many years, my friends were telling me to go with them. But because of my non-believing husband and my government job, I couldn’t go. This time I came, and I received so much. Each topic deeply touched my heart. I am very thankful to the organizers and sponsors of this seminar.”

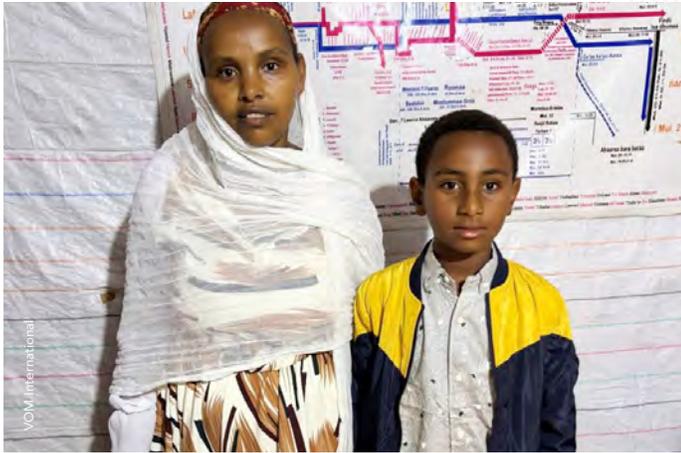
These heartfelt testimonies offer a glimpse of the impact this gathering has already had on the lives of the attending women – a reminder of what can happen when members in the body of Christ come together to uplift and support one another. Through your prayers and partnership, these faithful Christian leaders received not only spiritual nourishment but also healing, rest and renewed strength for the road ahead. Please pray that the seeds planted during this training event will bear lasting fruit in their lives and ministries, and that each of them will be divinely protected, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and filled with the peace of Christ as they serve in places of tremendous spiritual need.

HOW TO HELP

If you would like to support initiatives like this training event, please consider giving to our *Women’s Ministry Fund* or *Equipping the Saints Fund* at www.vomcanada.com/donate.

VOM Global Reports

ETHIOPIA: Christian Convert Rejected by Family



Momina and her son Mohammed.

After the death of her husband, Momina became the sole provider for her young son, Mohammed. Life was difficult for this struggling widow, but she experienced renewed hope when two Christian women shared the Gospel message with her. As a result of their consistent love and witness, Momina made the courageous decision to surrender her life to Christ.

This choice, however, came at a steep cost. The Muslim woman Momina and her son were sharing accommodation with soon forced them out of the home. Additionally, members of the new believer's family attempted to kidnap Mohammed; then later, they refused to help Momina when she was hospitalized in 2024 due to a serious illness.

Despite these painful trials, Momina has since received tangible support from the family of God. Today, she is healthy and actively involved in her local church. "God has given us a new and loving family," she says. "The love I have received helped me to forget my past sufferings."

A Christian ministry worker asks us to prayerfully remember Momina and Mohammed – specifically requesting that this widow and her son will receive the Lord's ongoing protection, strength and peace in the midst of ongoing threats.

INDONESIA: Safe Houses Bless Newly Converted Christians

In Indonesia, which is home to the largest Muslim population in the world, a Christian ministry operates four "blessing houses," which are serving as temporary safe havens for believers who have left Islam to follow Christ. These homes offer more than just shelter. They also serve as places of worship, discipleship and skills training, so persecuted followers of Christ can grow in faith and resilience.

One of VOM's ministry workers who serves in the area explained that every week she was encountering "small-scale persecution" from opposing members of the community. These locals have thrown rocks at the safe houses, spread harmful rumours, and attempted to incite local imams against her. Yet, the Christian worker's consistent kindness and generosity have eventually earned her more friends than enemies within the community.

Please pray for the ongoing ministry of these "blessing houses," asking the Lord to protect our Indonesian brothers and sisters in Christ, grant them favour with members of the community, and help them serve as testimonies of His hope, healing and transformation.

FEB 2026

“But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.” – Hebrews 2:9 ESV

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 QATAR Pray for the growth of the church in Qatar, using Acts 2:46-47 as a guide.	2 LIBYA Pray that Christians will find creative ways to share God’s Word in Libya, where Bibles are restricted.	3 UGANDA Pray for the safety of believers facing severe persecution, especially those who have converted from Islam.	4 BHUTAN Ask God to open doors for Bhutanese Christians to access Bibles and other discipleship resources.	5 VIETNAM Pray that the light of the Gospel will dispel the lies of communism, bringing freedom and truth in Vietnam.	6 RUSSIA (AND AREAS UNDER ITS CONTROL) Pray that Christians will share the “Good News” of Jesus, even though evangelism is restricted by law.	7 GUINEA Pray that the spread of radical Islam will cease, and that the truth of the Gospel will take root.
8 MALAYSIA Ask the Lord to stir curiosity in the hearts of Muslims, leading them to seek truth through Christian media.	9 KYRGYZSTAN Pray that believers will faithfully continue to gather for worship and fellowship despite restrictive laws.	10 BRUNEI Though Islamic education is mandatory, may Christian youth receive discipleship at home and church.	11 SIERRA LEONE Pray for the protection of Christian converts who have been threatened because of their newfound faith.	12 BENIN Pray for increased access to Bibles, especially in rural areas where Scriptural resources are scarce.	13 LAOS Ask the Lord to minister to the family of Pastor Thongkham Philavanh, who was martyred in 2024.	14 VENEZUELA Pray that Christians will receive opportunities to testify of Christ among Marxist guerrilla groups.
15 SOMALIA Pray for comfort on behalf of Hawa, who was abandoned by her husband after placing her faith in Jesus.	16 NIGER Pray for greater access to audio Bibles in local dialects so more Nigeriens will hear the Word of God.	17 YEMEN Ask the Lord to empower Yemeni Christians to proclaim the Gospel message with wisdom and courage.	18 TÜRKIYE Pray for churches in Türkiye, where Christians make up less than one percent of the population.	19 AFGHANISTAN Pray for the continuance of the Gospel among displaced Afghans, so many more can receive salvation.	20 MAURITANIA Pray for the encouragement of Christians who have been harassed for sharing their faith.	21 MYANMAR May pastors who have been arrested for proclaiming the Gospel receive courage, comfort and justice.
22 TOGO Pray for the physical/emotional healing of believers who have been attacked for embracing Christianity.	23 AFGHANISTAN Pray that members of Islamic terrorist groups like the Taliban will come to know Christ as their Saviour.	24 LAOS Pray for believers who have been rejected by members of their families and/or villages for following Jesus.	25 DJIBOUTI Pray that Christian ministries will remain effective despite being denied official registration.	26 VIETNAM Pray for evangelists who travel thousands of kilometres by motorbike to share the Gospel in remote areas.	27 MALAWI Pray that persecuted Yao Christians will receive love, support and care from their global Christian family.	28 CHAD Ask God to provide needed discipleship materials to believers throughout this Central African nation.

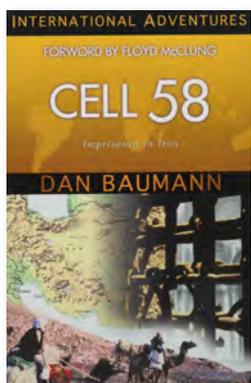
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Resources

Shop online at store.vomcanada.org

Cell 58: Imprisoned in Iran | \$15



"It's strange. I stand by his cell sometimes, and I hear him praying for us! He's doing all this for love? We know nothing about this God of love, but it sounds very right."

– An Iranian prison guard referencing Dan Baumann

Although he was just an ordinary traveller, Dan Baumann was wrongly accused of espionage and thrown into Iran's most infamous high-security prison while visiting the country. In that unlikely place, under the threat of execution and in the midst of despair, he witnessed the powerful triumph of God's love over fear. Join Dan as he relives his perilous trials by reading through the pages of *Cell 58*, an inspiring true story of courageous faith. Paperback, 190 pages

iBIBLE Puzzle: Jonah and the Great Fish | \$12

This unique puzzle by RevelationMedia features artwork from the stunning iBIBLE video series. Consisting of 1,000 jigsaw pieces, the *Jonah and the Great Fish* puzzle portrays a famous scene in the animated story of Jonah. When the Old Testament prophet tried to run from God's call to Nineveh, he was consequently swallowed by an enormous fish. It was while confined within the belly of the large sea creature that Jonah repented and turned in obedience to God.

(Puzzle is 19" tall x 28" wide.)



Wurmbrand: Tortured for Christ – the Complete Story | \$18

This most recently released biographical compilation explores the inspiring lives of Pastor Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand – publishing their complete story in one volume by combining the

following three books: *Tortured for Christ*, *In God's Underground* and *The Pastor's Wife*. During his 14 years of imprisonment, Pastor Wurmbrand was tortured, beaten and locked away in a solitary confinement cell. His wife Sabina spent three years at a labour camp, nearly freezing to death as she and other prisoners worked strenuously on the construction of the famous Danube Canal. Yet, despite their treacherous hardships, the ministering couple had an unshakeable faith in Christ. Your own faith will be inspired as you go deep inside the darkest prison cells to see how the light of Christ continues to shine from the hearts of those wholeheartedly committed to Him. Hardcover, 381 pages