

May

26

THE  
 VOICE  
OF THE MARTYRS

**THE FRUIT OF  
FORGIVENESS**

A GENTLE RESPONSE  
TO THEIR ATTACKERS

A JOYFUL PROCESSION

GOD'S PEACE AFTER  
ISIS ABDUCTION



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



# A Graduation RECONCILIATION

*Mariatu was prepared for a momentous occasion, but would her parents be there?*

**M**ariatu Sesay and 29 other graduates paraded down the main street of their Sierra Leonean town, wearing dark blue gowns over white dresses they had sewn for themselves, their hearts overflowing with joy.

A trumpeter, a trombonist and a drummer processed with the women as they sang praises to the Lord. The marchers were on their way to receive diplomas for completing a three-year training program, certifying they were ready to start their own sewing businesses.

The parade of praise was significant in a country where only 12% of the population is Christian. Most of Sierra Leone's 8.7 million people are either Muslim (61%) or practice traditional tribal religions (24%), and many mix their religious practices. It is estimated that 90% of Sierra Leoneans are aligned with secret societies whose occult rituals dominate most aspects of life in the country.

For 21-year-old Mariatu, the graduation celebration would also be

a chance to reunite with parents she hadn't seen in five years. The last time she was with them had also been a momentous day. It was the day she placed her faith in Christ.

It was also the day they kicked her out of their home.

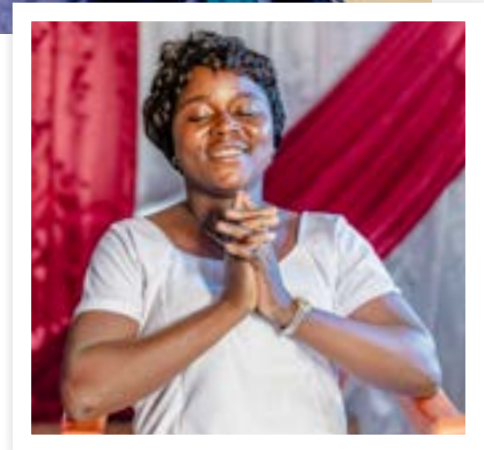
## **A Day of Decisions**

At 16 years old, Mariatu had a chore of collecting firewood in the forest. She and other girls from her community would spend hours together gathering firewood.

One day, as Mariatu gathered wood, a Christian friend shared the Gospel with her. Mariatu was intrigued but feared what her family might think, as her father was an imam at a local mosque. "My family did not see the church as anything good," she said.

When the friend invited her to attend a church service, Mariatu agreed in spite of her fears.

On the following Sunday, Mariatu did not tell her family where she was going. Slipping away was easy because of her regular firewood-gathering



▲ Mariatu and her fellow graduates joyfully parade through town as they prepare to receive their diplomas and new sewing machines. She is excited about starting her own business and prays for the Lord's guidance.

duty. Entering the church that morning was life-altering.

"I was joyful," she said of hearing God's Word for the first time. "It went to my heart. The Word of God, I understood it. It was very clear the first time."

That day, Mariatu accepted the Gospel message and placed her trust in Christ.

But someone had told Mariatu's family where she had gone. "When I came back from the church, they never accepted me into the house," she said.

*“My parents who persecuted me came to witness and to see what God has done in my life.”*

### Abandoned and Alone

With nowhere to live, Mariatu shifted from rejection to anger. “I felt, first of all, that maybe I didn’t have Christ in me because I was discouraged,” she said. “I was really, really mad at my parents. But then the pastor followed up with me, and he told me to have faith in God.”

Mariatu ended up living outside and unprotected in a market area. She spent two years without a real home. The market where Mariatu slept was dangerous. “It was very scary to be there,” she said. “I was very alone, and there were some mad insane people in the market.”

On her own and defenseless, Mariatu was sexually assaulted one night. Women in many parts of Africa are vulnerable to gender-based violence. Approximately 62% of Sierra Leonean women ages 15–49 have reported experiencing some kind of physical or sexual violence.

Mariatu became pregnant from the assault. When she gave birth months later in the market, her baby did not survive.

Shortly afterward, some Christian friends invited Mariatu to attend the sewing training course that included a place to live and Christian discipleship.

“It helped me to grow spiritually,” she said. “And I praise God. Besides my faith growing, I was also learning how to sew.”

### A New Start

As Mariatu marched forward to receive her diploma, her parents were present. Though Mariatu had not spoken to them since the day she had been kicked out of her home, they still attended her graduation celebration.

“I have the greatest joy today because my parents who persecuted me came to witness and to see what God has done in my life,” Mariatu said.

When Mariatu’s mother saw her daughter’s radiant face and realized what Mariatu had accomplished without family support, she felt

overcome with emotion. “My mother just wept,” said Mariatu, who greeted her tearful mother.

And long before she saw her father at her graduation, Mariatu had decided to forgive him.

“I spoke to them because I had been taught from the Word of God to forgive,” she said.

Diploma now in hand, Mariatu has spiritual goals as well as business plans. “My first goal in life is to be able to serve God better than ever because he is the reason I am here today,” she said. She asked for prayer to stay focused on her walk with the Lord and also to establish her small business now that the training is complete.

The next time Mariatu goes to the

market, she will have products and services to sell, using the new treadle sewing machine and the fabric that she was given at the end of the ceremony. Her future sales will enable her to rent a home so she won’t have to return to sleeping on the ground between market stalls.

“I can now raise money out of what I have learned,” she said. “I am able to take care of myself now.”

As Mariatu begins her new life, she does not expect any support from her parents. But she does believe she will have the opportunity to share her faith with them, and she plans to do so as soon as possible.

“By the grace of God,” she said, “I will do that.” ■



▲ Women in many parts of Africa are rejected by their families for becoming followers of Christ, and they often have no means of supporting themselves. Sewing centres provide valuable training that, when combined with gifts of sewing machines and starter fabrics, enable Christian women to provide for themselves and their children.





# *Until Their* **LAST BREATH**

*An attack that left three Christian brothers gravely wounded birthed a vision to invite their persecutors into the family of God.*

**O**n a bright summer day, as palm branches rasped quietly in the breeze and macaque monkeys scampered along the eaves of the nearby church, Selvan sat with his family in the peaceful shade of their covered porch and recalled one life-changing day. As he told his story with strong emotion, he was quick to explain the tears. "My heart is filled with gratitude towards Jesus. These are tears of joy."

On a day four years earlier, Selvan and his brothers were eager to help prepare for their cousin's wedding festivities. As the only girl in a sea of boy cousins, she was as close as a sister to them. Her approaching wedding day brought joy to a family that had suffered much loss and grief.

\* \* \*

Selvan had lost his mother, four brothers and several cousins in Sri Lanka's 25-year civil war between the Buddhist Sinhalese-majority government and the Hindu Tamil insurgents.

As Christians, they had the hope of seeing their loved ones in heaven, but it didn't diminish their grief. Selvan's father, Aaris, the founding pastor of Gethsemane Church, was especially concerned about the wellbeing of his family and congregation. All of his sons were engaged in active Christian ministry, and his children and grandchildren faced harsh persecution as followers of Christ.

*“Because we are building the kingdom of God, there are people in this area who are opposing us .”*

“Because we are building the kingdom of God, there are people in this area who are opposing us,” Selvan said. “When the kids go to school, there is opposition there. When we go to work, there is opposition there. In the society, there is opposition there.”

Some of the persecution is indirect; Christians are offered a lower price when they sell their crops, or they are excluded from social functions. But sometimes the opposition is overt. “The main officials in the area are all part of Shiv Sena a Hindu fundamentalist group,” said Selvan, who works in the government and knows these village officials professionally. “If I have a project that needs approval from their office, they won’t sign it. There are government benefits that we are supposed to get, but if I go to do that paperwork, they won’t sign those papers.”

At times, the opposition has turned violent. Pastor Aaris was beaten up, and his home was pelted with stones. However, the church continued growing, which angered the Hindu fundamentalists around them. The family suspected that the persecution would soon escalate. Having lost four of his nine sons already, Aaris was burdened by the fear of losing more of them to anti-Christian violence. So the wedding was a welcome occasion for joy.

\* \* \*

Weddings in their rural, Hindu-majority area of Sri Lanka are community events, and often the whole village not only knows about the event but will turn out to bless the new couple. In the days leading up to their cousin’s wedding, however, the local response was ominous.

“Three days prior to the wedding, we decorated the street with lights,” Selvan said. “These people would come on a motorcycle and ... try to break the wires

so that the lights would go off.” Twice the family repaired the lights, and twice more the men returned to break them.

The joyous ceremony took place in the church, and the long-awaited party got underway at the family home two doors down. At the wishes of the couple and their families, Christian praise music filled the festive courtyard.

Some neighbours took issue with the music choice.

“They were trying to pick a fight with us,” Selvan recalled about the interactions. “Two of the people said they were celebrating their birthday. They came and said, ‘Change the music into something else so we can dance!’”

When their demand wasn’t met, they became angry. They pulled down more lights and stormed off, throwing rocks to break down the canopy that had been erected for the occasion. A few moments later, they heaved a stone over the fence and struck one

of Selvan’s brothers in the head. The family could tell right away that he would need medical attention.


The police refused to provide help or protection, so Selvan and his oldest brother, Caleb, helped their brother onto the back of a motorbike and took him to the local hospital. Around midnight, after their injured brother was admitted, Selvan and Caleb went to the police station to file a criminal complaint about the assault.

On the slow drive home, they arrived at a bridge near their house, and the road was strewn with large stones and debris to slow them down. A Front-Line Worker later confirmed that the ambush was coordinated by an informant in the police station.

“The attackers threw something at us, so first my brother fell from his motorcycle and ran,” Caleb said. “Then they threw something at me, and I also fell.” In an instant he was surrounded

▼ Since the brutal attack, Selvan (*centre*) has continued to serve the church and community with his family. Pictured with him (*left to right*) are his brothers Arjunan and Caleb; his father, Aaris; and his wife, Aanya.





*“We want to make sure you will never kneel before your Lord again!”*

by his assailants — men he knew from the community. Some had been at the wedding festivities; others were parents of students who were enrolled in a free tutoring program at the church, and even a couple of the older students themselves were present.

Selvan yelled for his brother to run and took off as fast as he could, but soon realized that Caleb was not with him. In the darkness, Selvan could not see what was happening, but he heard shouts and could tell his brother was in trouble.

He turned back and called to the attackers, begging them to leave his brother alone.

“I said, ‘Hey, he has a wife and kids. He is a family man. Don’t hurt him. If you want to do anything, hurt me,’” Selvan recalled. In a moment, he too was surrounded.

The men aimed blows at the back of his legs to make him kneel before them, calling him to surrender to them. “We want to make sure you will never kneel before your Lord again!” they said.

They beat Selvan with cruel, hand-crafted weapons made from bicycle gears cut in half and attached to the end of a stick — makeshift clubs that left puncture wounds up and down Selvan’s arms and legs as he curled up on the ground and shielded his head.

The beating only stopped when

Selvan, both arms and both legs broken and blood oozing from countless wounds, decided to play dead. The ruse worked. His attackers, satisfied that he was dead or at least dying, shoved his body off the side of the road into a ditch.

Caleb, who had a deep wound on the side of his face from a machete blow that had glanced off his helmet, had passed out by the time the attackers turned their attention to Selvan.

When he regained consciousness, he staggered home to get help, arriving about 20 minutes after the attack had begun. The men of the family went in search of Selvan and finally found him in the ditch.

The two brothers were treated at the local government-run hospital where their other brother was already being treated, but the facility was not equipped to provide the level of trauma care Selvan required. Their father pleaded for help. A Front-Line Worker responded quickly and rallied the help from members of the global body of Christ. A couple of days after the attack, Selvan was moved to a private hospital where he could get the operations he needed. After six days in the hospital, the family moved him into a rented house near the hospital for a month and continued to bring him for treatment every day. Nevertheless, the orthopaedic doctor warned that recovery would be a long road. He said it would take about six months to begin walking.

However, Selvan hoped for — and received — a miracle. On post-op day 30, Selvan walked into the astonished



▲ Selvan believes the Lord will bring many in the community to faith in Christ through this attack and the family's forgiveness. Church leaders are planning to expand the church building to accommodate the whole village.  
*Inset: Selvan shows X-ray images of some of the surgical repairs he required after the attack.*

doctor's exam room. A year later, he was playing competitive soccer. In the four years since the attack, he has also married and welcomed his first daughter. Only the scars, x-rays and memories are left as evidence of the devastating attack.

\* \* \*

In the aftermath of the attack, he said, the Lord has led his family and his church on a journey of forgiveness and hope. They called for 40 days of fasting and prayer to know how to reach out to the men who led the attack. At the end of those 40 days, Selvan approached one of the ringleaders of the attack with the gift of a Bible.

"We are not giving this to convert you," Selvan assured the man. "We don't want you to change your religion but to change your heart." The man received the Bible without anger.

Another attacker was walking in front of the family home not long after that, and Selvan felt a prompting to invite the man in. He accepted the invitation and received Selvan's hospitality. Over cups of hot chai tea, Selvan was able to express his love

and forgiveness and explained the Gospel to him.

"If I would have invited him, in general he would not have come, but it was the Lord who brought him in," Selvan said.

Caleb said his role as the teaching pastor in the church has included helping the congregation know how to persevere and forgive in the face of opposition. The best teaching, he said, is done by living as an example.

"We are modelling that even when people attack us and hurt us, we are forgiving them," he said.

That example has empowered the church to continue worshipping together and serving the community. They still offer tutoring for local students, making a special point to care for the children whose fathers attacked Caleb and Selvan. The church even plans to expand the tutoring ministry to establish a better-quality school for the community.

During an overnight prayer vigil at the church on New Year's Eve the next year, one of the attackers and his family came to the church service and asked the family and the whole congregation for forgiveness. Others have acknowledged that the brothers, whom they intended to kill, had been saved by their God.

However, some of the attackers have remained unrepentant. One took his own life. Another has issued new death threats against Pastor Caleb. Some Hindu leaders have planned to build a tall Hindu shrine next to the church to block it from view.

None of this has stopped the bold vision and witness of the church.

"There are 1,500 people in this village, so our plan is that the whole 1,500 will be saved, and that they will come to the church," Selvan said. "We believe that this whole community will become Believers. That is why we keep moving forward in our ministry. Until the last breath, we want to serve the Lord." ■



# WHEN ISIS KNOCKS

*The radical Islamist group sentenced Yousef to death. God had other plans.*

**W**hen someone started pounding on his door, Yousef Fawzi knew there would be trouble.

It was 6 August, 2014, and the heavily armed men at the door were fighters with the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). One month earlier the Islamist group had captured the city of Mosul, where Yousef and his traditional Christian family lived.

The summer of 2014 was the beginning of a brutal three-year period when ISIS militants ruled Mosul and enforced their strict interpretation of Islamic law. Residents faced torture

and execution for even perceived violations. During the occupation, some 4,000 captured Iraqi soldiers were executed, and ISIS fighters murdered, sexually assaulted and tortured thousands of people.

Christians and minority groups were especially targeted. The jihadis marked Christians' homes with an Arabic *N* (ن) to indicate they were "Nazarenes," their term for followers of Christ.

Yousef's family wasn't originally from Mosul. They had fled Baghdad when the capital city faced an upswing in Sunni versus Shiite Muslim violence in 2007. During that time, Yousef's father

## *“The first four days they asked me to convert to Islam to fight with them, to be one of ISIS.”*

had been held hostage by an Islamist group aligned with al-Qaida.

Yousef’s father was so afflicted by fear during his two-week ordeal that he emerged partially paralyzed. The family thought they would be safer away from Baghdad, so they moved to Mosul.

Then ISIS captured their new home city. “My own church was put on fire; everything was damaged,” Yousef said. “They hung their black ISIS flags in the whole area.” Yousef tried to flee with his family, along with thousands of others, but he had no vehicle, and his father’s poor health made travel difficult and even dangerous.

Yousef and his parents were trapped in their Mosul home when the jihadis arrived.

### **In Enemy Hands**

When Yousef answered the door, the radical Muslims demanded a *jizya*, a kind of protection tax levied on non-Muslims. Yousef refused. “I just stood firm in my faith and said I will not do it.”

The family had pictures of Christ on their walls, visible from the open door, and the militants burst in and started knocking them down. Yousef tried to stop them. “There was a fight,” recalled Yousef. “They slapped me, and I slapped them back. Someone else just hit me with his gun on the back of the head and I fell down, unconscious.”

The ISIS fighters then threatened Yousef’s infirm father and elderly mother before dragging Yousef away. “When I woke up, my hands were bound, and I was hanging by my leg,” he said. His left leg was wrapped in a chain that pierced into his calf muscle while he dangled from the ceiling of an ISIS cell.

Soon they tortured him in other ways. They hit him with an electrical cattle prod. When he lost consciousness, they threw filthy water at him to wake him up. Throughout these abuses, they tried to turn him away from Christ.

“The first four days they asked me to convert to Islam to fight with them, to be one of ISIS,” Yousef said. When he refused, his captors changed their tactics. They tied him to a pillar in a room and sent in three Muslim women to sexually assault him and entice him with money. Forced to be with them for days, Yousef was told by the women that if he would become a Muslim and marry them, his torments would end.

Yousef stayed true to his faith in Christ Jesus.

After 12 days, his captors took him back to his cell, hung him again by his leg and beat him. They even poured salt into his leg wound. Yet Yousef

remained firm.

“They were saying, ‘How long will you stand? Just surrender, give mercy to yourself. Just convert. Why do you do this to yourself? Just give mercy to yourself and convert to Islam and be one of us, and you will be free.’ But of course, I refused them,” he said.

The intermittent torture went on for more than a month.

“During that time, I was just praying all the time, ‘Take my soul, God!’” Yousef said. “I was questioning God, ‘Why has this happened to me? Why do I have to suffer? Why this pain? What did I do wrong that you make me walk through this bad, traumatizing experience?’”

Yousef’s agony reached a point where he began asking his captors to kill him. But he would not give up his Christian faith. “Jesus’ teaching came to my mind that people will come, kidnap you, hurt you, punish you, persecute you because of his name,” Yousef said.



► Militants with the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) captured Yousef during their brutal occupation of Mosul, when they strictly imposed Islamic law.



▲ ISIS imprisoned Yousef for 45 days, chaining him by his leg. Doctors initially told him his leg would have to be amputated.

After 45 days, Yousef's torturers told him they had decided to execute him. Armed guards took him outside and covered his eyes. He stood still, his shirt covered in blood, knowing what was about to happen.

Then the group's leader received a phone call.

"We will not execute the death sentence; just throw him in the street!" the leader yelled after the call.

The terrorists beat Yousef until he lost consciousness.

### **Doubly Free**

A group of Muslim Arab men found Yousef in a roadway, bruised and maimed — but free. They took him to some Iraqi Kurdish soldiers who were fighting the ISIS militants. Yousef remained unconscious as the soldiers transported him to a Catholic hospital in Kirkuk.

When he awoke, Yousef didn't know where he was. The bright lights of the hospital blinded him, and his surroundings were so different than the brutality he had just endured. He thought he had died and was in heaven. Even his own parents had trouble believing that Yousef was alive. When hospital staff called them with the good news, they initially thought someone was trying to deceive them.

Doctors assured them, and Yousef, that he was alive and that they would care for him. The kind hospital staff spent three months nursing him back to health. But his left leg, badly damaged and infected, would not heal. Doctors said it needed to be amputated, which made Yousef feel hopeless. His mind filled with thoughts of suicide. Eventually, through the efforts of caring Christians, Yousef was sent to Europe, where doctors were

*"It took time until I forgave them. People asked and talked about forgiveness, saying God forgave us, so I need to do the same to forgive them."*

able to save his leg.

Yousef's rehabilitation, however, was difficult. "After the incident, because of trauma, I was only sleeping three hours a day," he said. As he worked to recover, a battle raged in his mind. "I started to have these evil thoughts to create a group and go back to kill them and to have revenge." Medical practitioners provided Yousef with emotional as well as physical therapies, but the Christians who met with him regularly provided the spiritual guidance that challenged his vindictive thoughts. Eventually he allowed the Holy Spirit to change his heart.

"I forgave the people what they did to me," Yousef said. "It took time until I forgave them. People asked and talked about forgiveness, saying God forgave us, so I need to do the same to forgive them. I can forget them, forget what happened to me," he said. "Their

encouragement is how I overcame this traumatic experience.”

Yousef said his purpose in life also changed. When he recovered, he moved back to the Middle East, and today he actively shares the hope he has in Christ with other Iraqi refugees. He regularly meets with people for Bible studies and times of prayer. And he asks for prayer that his ministry will help more people learn to endure suffering and receive God’s peace.

“I love to share my story with all people,” Yousef said. “I love to teach how to stand firm in faith and how to depend on God’s Word during our life, even in the hardship . . . .”

Even now, more than a decade since his abduction and torture by ISIS, Yousef’s leg wound hasn’t completely healed, causing pain. Yet when people notice it, he has an opportunity to share his story of survival.

People often ask Yousef why he didn’t pay the *jizya* or convert to escape all that ISIS did to him. “I just explain how things happened. I encourage them with the Word of God, as well,” he said. “I tell them, ‘Don’t surrender! Don’t surrender!’”


Yousef added, with a laugh, “I was hopeless. But now, thank God! I give thanks to the Lord.”

When asked why his ISIS captors let him go after saying they were about to execute him, he replies, “I do not know. I just thank God that there are other plans for me.”

Yousef continues to share his message of hope with people enduring their own struggles. “There is nothing without any solution. There will be hope,” he tells them. “We should not surrender to being hopeless.” ■



▲ *Top:* When Yousef recovered from his injuries, he moved back to the Middle East. *Bottom:* Today Yousef regularly tells people how God sustained him during his captivity. He uses his testimony to encourage others during Bible studies and outreach events.



# HOW WIDE IS YOUR CONCERN?

*By Richard Wurmbbrand*

**W**hile Cleopas and a friend journeyed toward a village called Emmaus, Jesus joined them and asked what they were discussing. But they did not recognize him. Cleopas asked Jesus, "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" And the resurrected Jesus said to them, "What things?" (Luke 24:18-19).

So many things had happened in Jerusalem. Two robbers had been crucified. Would one of Jesus' disciples have gone to comfort their grief-stricken

mothers? One of these thieves had become a brother. Jesus' disciples should at least have provided him a decent burial. And what about his executioners? They had shown wickedness. They needed salvation. Would one of Jesus' disciples have loved them and shown them the way to receive forgiveness?

Many things happened in three days. "What things?" asks Jesus. He is interested in all aspects of human life - virtues and sins, joys and sorrows. He wishes to share everything with us. But as the disciples spoke about "things" that had come to pass in Jerusalem, they were really obsessed with only one thing: What had happened to Jesus, whom they loved?

Many Christians are concerned only with their own personal relationship with the Lord. But Christ is the life — the life around them. It is he whom you can see in hungry, thirsty, naked, sick and enslaved humanity. He has become its sin. For many Christians, religion is only he and I, forgetting that the love between a man and Christ is always a love in a broader relationship: he, his whole creation and me. A Christian, as an heir of God, shares his responsibilities. The whole world is his parish, including our brothers and sisters in Communist countries.

The Communists have not succeeded in winning leading personalities or thinkers among Christ's followers to their cause. But the global body of Christ has won leading Communist personalities to Christ. The greater the persecution, the greater the inner urge for witnessing. So God makes the wrath of men to praise him. The terrible oppression makes Christians witness for Christ to the torturers who are ruling in Communist countries. And they do it with more success than we can disclose.

A pastor of the Russian underground church told me, "In the upper classes of the Communist structure it has become

a fashion now to read the Bible and to inquire about God." He gave us names of those converted. There were names that had made headlines in the news.

The Gospel has advanced among the ruling class in other Communist countries also. When the Bolsheviks entered Czechoslovakia, the members of the Czech Parliament, surrounded by Russian troops, were in panic. Only one member, a Christian, quietly took out his Bible and read. The others asked him, "Don't you care about the tragedy around us? We ourselves might be arrested and deported to Siberia soon. How can you sit so quietly?" He answered, "This is the Word of God; it gives comfort to the troubled heart." Then they invited him to read the Scriptures from the rostrum of the Communist Parliament, from which only bitter Leninist theories had been propagated. Sixty members of Parliament asked for Bibles afterward and received them.

This is the underground church working under conditions of terror but winning even its oppressors for Christ. It is dangerous work not only for them, but for us, too. Yet the work must be done. It is stupid to fear those who can kill only the body and afterward can do nothing, instead of fearing the One who can throw body and soul into hell.

In China, a sword was put to the chest of a Christian, and its wielder asked, "Are you a Christian?" He answered, "Yes." They would have killed him, but an officer said, "Free him; he is an idiot." One asked him afterward, "How could you confess Christ with such courage?" His reply was, "I had read the story of Peter's denial of Christ, and I did not wish to weep bitterly." Neither do we wish to weep for the neglect of fulfilling our duty toward our oppressed brethren and their oppressors, who are also beloved by Christ.

Communism is advancing, and we have to do our best to win the Communists for Christ. Communism

has advanced in the United States. The youth of America have been poisoned with Communist ideas.

"And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Jesus asked the two disciples (Luke 24:17). If he asks you this question, let the answer not be, "My only concern is a very narrow one — you and me." Enlarge your vision. Love God, love his whole creation, love good and evil men, love the martyrs in prison and their torturers, and help that they might all be brought to the One who was concerned for all, who shares everybody's tears and joys and who died and resurrected for all. ■



**Richard Wurmbrand (1909 – 2001)** was imprisoned in Communist Romania for his faith in Christ. He and his wife, Sabina (1913 – 2000), later sought ways to serve persecuted Christians and in 1967 started a global ministry known today as *The Voice of the Martyrs*. You can read VOM's books about Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand and watch the two feature films about their lives for free on the VOM App. The app is available for download in the App Store and on Google Play.

# Prayer Diary

May 2026

- F 1. India Pray that Basavaraj and his family will remain strong in the Lord and that many in their village will turn to Christ.
- S 2. Morocco Pray that new churches will be established despite government restrictions and obstacles.
- S 3. Vietnam Pray for the provision of Christians like Cai and Hien who are harassed and imprisoned for their faith in Christ.
- M 4. Sri Lanka Pray for Pastor Benedict and his church. They struggle to gather for worship because of strong Buddhist opposition.
- T 5. Philippines Using Acts 2:38 as a guide, pray that Islamists on the island of Mindanao will repent and be saved.
- W 6. Lebanon Praise God that many Muslim refugees in Lebanon have placed their faith in Christ and are active in local churches.
- T 7. Kazakhstan Using Isaiah 41:10 as a guide, pray that Kazakh Christians will be strengthened to serve the Lord without fear.
- F 8. Oman Pray that Muslims seeking the truth will find it in the person of Jesus Christ.
- S 9. Iran Use Hebrews 12:1–2 to pray for the encouragement of persecuted Iranian Christians.
- S 10. Madagascar Pray for the boldness and protection of Christians who witness to Muslims.
- M 11. Nicaragua Pray that church leaders who have been threatened or arrested will sense God's peace.
- T 12. Qatar Pray for the protection of Qatari Believers, who must use extreme caution when gathering for worship.
- W 13. Tunisia Despite a rich Christian history, Tunisia is 99% Sunni Muslim. Pray that Tunisians will place their faith in Christ.
- T 14. Pakistan Blasphemy laws often target Christians. Pray for Tabish, Kalu, Sonia, Samia and many others facing blasphemy charges.
- F 15. Niger Pray for Christians displaced by Islamist attacks, both Nigeriens and those who have fled to Niger as refugees.
- S 16. Oman The government restricts the sale of Bibles to Omanis. Pray for increased access to God's Word.
- S 17. Cuba Pray that Christians will wisely but boldly proclaim the Gospel online, not fearing retaliation.
- M 18. Tanzania Pray for unreached tribal groups that are resistant to the Gospel.
- T 19. Myanmar Pray that churches, orphanages and other ministries will remain open despite government restrictions and crackdowns.
- W 20. Nepal Pray that Christians facing opposition from Hindu nationalists will be bold in faith.
- T 21. Laos Pray for training designed to help tribal Christians persevere through persecution and boldly share the Gospel.
- F 22. Burkina Faso Pray that Esther and her children will remain strong in the Lord; her husband was killed by Islamic militants.
- S 23. Yemen Pray that Christian media will be effective in reaching Yemenis with the Gospel.
- S 24. Kazakhstan Pray for Pastor Zanzhar, who was fined for continuing to minister after his church was "de-registered."
- M 25. Pakistan Pray for efforts to distribute Bibles and Christian literature in areas dominated by radicalized Muslims.
- T 26. Oman Pray that Christian expatriates in Oman will have opportunities to share the Gospel with Omanis.
- W 27. Tanzania Pray for local churches that boldly work to spread the Gospel.
- T 28. Sierra Leone Pray that Christians will be faithful witnesses, shining the light of Christ in areas darkened by demon worship.
- F 29. Iraq Pray for the comfort and healing of those wounded in Islamist attacks.
- S 30. Indonesia Praise God that Muhammad Kace's prison sentence for evangelizing was reduced. Pray for him as he awaits release.
- S 31. CAR\* Pray that the faithful witness of Christians in the CAR will help change the hearts of Islamists.

\*Central African Republic



**Christian Mission International - The Voice of the Martyrs, South Africa.**

CMI | P. O. Box 7157, Primrose Hill, 1417 South Africa | **Tel: 010 777 0114** (8am-1pm) | **Cell: 076-022-3336** (8am-5pm)  
Email: [cmi@vomsa.org](mailto:cmi@vomsa.org)/[bianca@vomsa.org](mailto:bianca@vomsa.org) | Website: [www.persecutionsa.org](http://www.persecutionsa.org) |  
Directors: Mr A.B. Illman (Executive); Pastor R. Marsh; Mr R. Keir; Mr D. Kirton

© Permission to reprint any portion of this Magazine must be obtained from Christian Mission International.

# Please Stand with Persecuted Christians



Serve persecuted Christians in hostile areas and restricted nations and be a voice for them. Your gift addresses all ministry needs, including the immediate needs of our persecuted brothers and sisters, while calling Christians around the world into closer fellowship with the persecuted and to a deeper commitment to Christ.

*Please consider a donation into any one of the following bank accounts:*

## Banking details: Christian Mission International

### Nedbank

Account no.: 1925-024946 (Cheque)

Branch Code: 192505 (Bedfordview)

Ref: Your Name/Cell Number

### Standard Bank

Account no.: 02-249-5592 (Cheque)

Branch Code: 018305 (Bedford Gardens)

Ref: Your Name/Cell Number

### ABSA Bank

Account no.: 909-861-7711 (Savings)

Branch Code: 632005 (Bedford Centre)

Ref: Your Name/Cell Number

## Helpful Prayer and Information Resource



### Download our FREE "VOM App" ON YOUR SMARTPHONE.

Type in "Voice of the Martyrs" when searching or click on the appropriate Google Play or App Store icon.

Daily reminders to pray for the persecuted; research Hostile or Restricted countries and the work VOM are doing there; connect to VOMRadio plus much, much more.



VOM App



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



Member of the  
International  
Christian  
Association  
(ICA)

Follow us:



[www.persecutionsa.org](http://www.persecutionsa.org)

Facebook@cmivomsa | Instagram@vom\_south\_africa