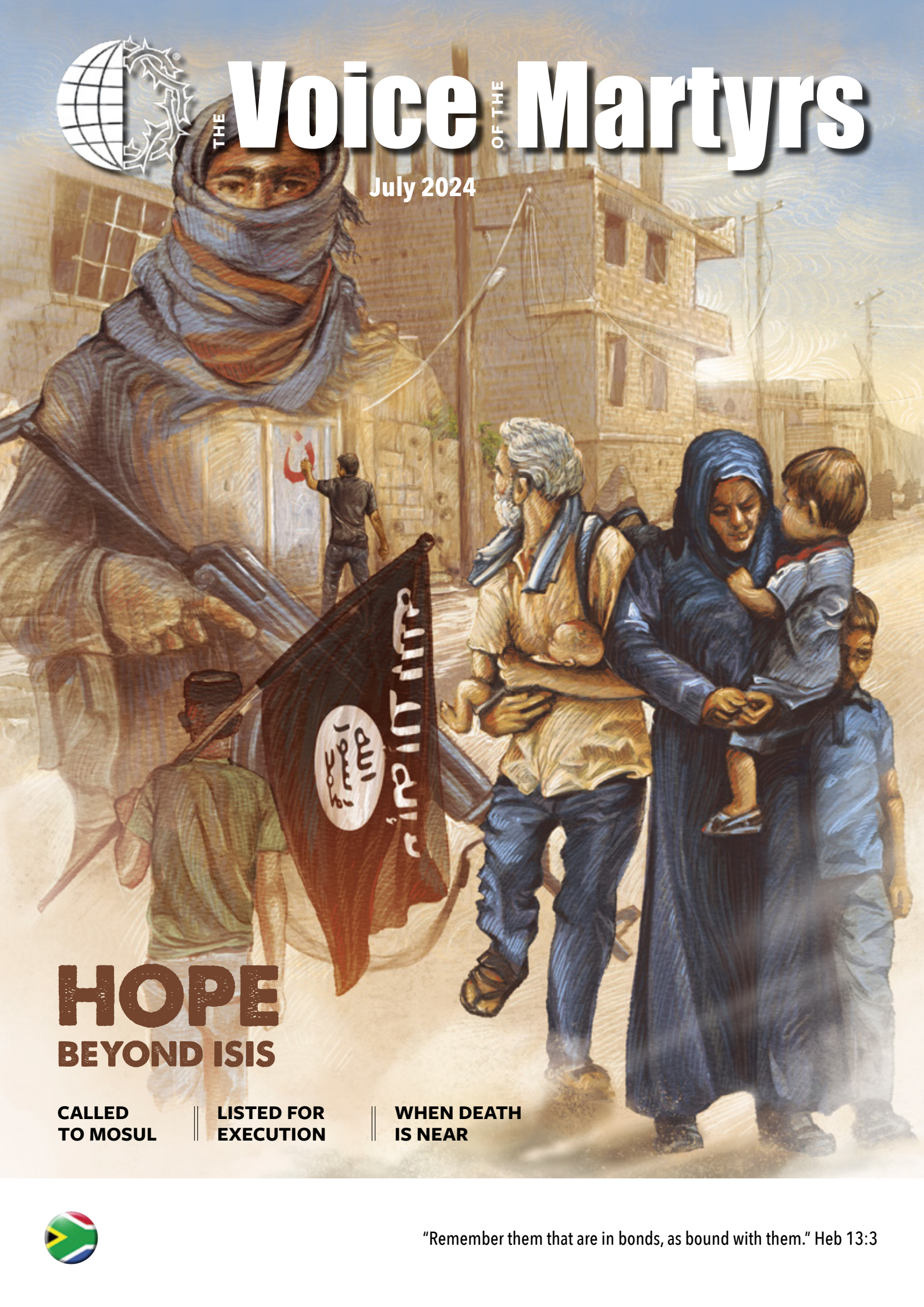




THE Voice OF THE Martyrs

July 2024



HOPE BEYOND ISIS

**CALLED
TO MOSUL**

**LISTED FOR
EXECUTION**

**WHEN DEATH
IS NEAR**



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

Ten Years Since ISIS

Imagine having a great deal of money while living in a place where there is nothing worth buying. Clearly, the real blessing is not the money but rather the things that are worth buying. By analogy, we can apply this to our own lives. Having time, energy and talent does not bring us joy. We are fulfilled only when we spend that time, energy and talent for something (ultimately someone) worthy.

Ten years ago, while facing an existential threat from the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), tens of thousands of our Christian family members in Iraq and Syria gave everything for Christ because they believed He was worthy.

We have continued serving Christians in Iraq and surrounding areas since the ISIS attacks, and people often ask us, "Where are they now?" and "How are they doing?" Many people reasonably assume that since ISIS has been largely defeated and its military conquests reversed in the region, there must be significant progress toward recovery. But, sadly, that is not the case. Most churches have not been re-established because people cannot return to devastated areas, there are no jobs, a functioning economy has not been restored, and security and infrastructure are severely lacking.

It is disappointing to learn that, 10 years on, so many of our Christian family members in the region remain scattered far from home and trapped in sorrowful circumstances. For the last decade, many have been living as refugees — a status that rarely allows children to attend quality schools or parents

to hold good jobs. The situation is devastating. They are encouraged by our support, but there is no end to their suffering in sight.

However, there is more to the story: **God is advancing His eternal kingdom amid the temporal tragedy.** In Acts 5:40–41, we read that the disciples rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. We need to consider this carefully when we are faced with decisions to spend ourselves (time, energy, talent or resources) for Christ. We are meant to seek opportunities to spend ourselves for Christ and rejoice when we find them.

Our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters continue to show us the way. Having lost everything at the hands of radical Muslims, they reach Muslims for Christ. They are seeing a revival and reaping a fruitful harvest for eternity because, even in their need, they are choosing to offer what little they have as a sacrifice to Christ. I invite you to watch some of their stories in our recent I Am N Virtual Event, now available for free in our mobile app (vom.org/app).

As we consider the sacrifices of persecuted Christians 10 years ago and continuing today, we should remember that they willingly give everything because they believe Christ is worth it. And even though few of them are likely to recover what they have lost in this world, we need to remember — they are right!

Ashley





LOVING His Enemies

Though paralyzed by a gunshot wound, an Iraqi pastor is undeterred from proclaiming the Gospel.

Haytham's marriage proposal to his wife, Mary, was the last and least romantic of the three that she received.

"I think I love you," he began, "and I want you to be my wife, but I also want to tell you my life's plan." Then he explained God's call on his life — his desire to leave his ministry work in Lebanon and return to his Iraqi homeland to preach the Gospel. "Most likely I will be living a harder life than the average person," he warned.

Haytham was prepared for rejection. He understood that living as a Christian worker in a war-torn, predominantly Muslim country was not every Christian's calling. His devotion to that calling, however, was precisely what Mary wanted in a husband.

"Lord, I want You to send somebody who is dedicated to You," she had prayed, "and that is the one whom I want to marry." She recognized Haytham as the answer to that prayer. A year after getting married, in 1999, the couple moved to an area of Lebanon that was heavily populated by Iraqi refugees and established a ministry in the community.

By the time Haytham and Mary had committed themselves to proclaiming the Gospel to Iraqis, Iraq had been in a state of war and economic instability for two decades. So the young couple waited for a sign from the Lord for the right time to go.

The Utmost Need

Haytham had grown up in a Catholic family near Baghdad, but he had many questions about the Bible and about God. And what he learned about Islam also left him dissatisfied. Then, in 1994, at age 23, he met some Christians who welcomed his questions. When one of them began to tell him about Christ and the story of salvation, Haytham interrupted him.

"Please forgive me," he said, "but I know this story. You don't have to tell me. I need to know if this Bible is really the Word of God or not. If this is the Word of God, I need to know what God wants me to do with it."

"Most likely I will be living a harder life than the average person."

Unfazed, the Christian gave Haytham what he asked for: confident answers about the truth and power of God's Word. But then he challenged Haytham not to think about "what God wants from me" but "what I need from God." This was a perspective Haytham had not considered.

"What do you think is my utmost need?" Haytham asked the young man.

"Your most important need is the most important need of every human being," the Christian replied. "You are a sinner, and you need Him to save you from your sins." With that, he returned to the story of the Gospel, but this time Haytham understood and responded to the story in a way he never had before.

Haytham's growth in the faith was rapid. Within a year, he was asked to lead a youth group, and in 1996 he was nominated to attend a theological training programme in Jordan. After completing his training programme, he got an opportunity to go to Lebanon, where he continued his studies while helping a Lebanese pastor plant a church.

But his heart told him that pastoring a church in Lebanon was not the right path for him at the time. During a missions conference, he prayed for the Lord's direction. "The Lord touched my heart that I have to think about my country of origin, Iraq," Haytham recalled, "and I have to go preach Christ there."

Paving the Way to Mosul

Soon after Haytham and Mary began working with Iraqi refugees, two events made it possible for them to begin their work in Iraq.

"In 2003, I finished my theological studies here in Lebanon," Haytham said, "and the same year the regime of Saddam Hussein fell. I considered that a sign from the Lord that I could now enter Iraq."

Haytham and another church planter spent a month in Iraq, evaluating the situation and finding a place to work. Baghdad, Haytham said, was "claustrophobic," with many Christian workers flooding in to take advantage of the region's sudden openness. So instead of staying there, he and Mary went to Mosul, a city that was harder to reach both geographically and spiritually.

Haytham found a two-story rental house that would enable them to live on the second floor while using the first floor for ministry work. And before the end of 2003, the couple had moved their

family of four into their new home.

Mary was immediately confronted with the challenges Haytham had warned her about when he proposed marriage. They were shunned by their neighbours, spied on in their home and denounced in the local mosque.

"Of course it was hard on me," Mary recalled. "But because I had the service of the Lord as a goal, this was a great encouragement to me."

And their work was bearing fruit. "It was a wonderful, wonderful time for the ministry," Haytham said. "People were so hungry. Within the first two months, the ground floor was packed with people, and I had ministries in every village." The first group of new Believers were baptised soon after the establishment of the church.

Pressure from the community, however, was real and growing. With the mosque only 100 yards from their front door, Haytham and Mary could hear mosque leaders instructing local Muslims to shun them. Haytham also knew he was being followed, and soon their landlord delivered some bad news. The mosque's sheikh had issued a *fatwa* against them; the ruling, based on Islamic law, demanded that the Christians be expelled from the community. Their family and their thriving church would have to move.

"Just Move"

Haytham found a new location in Mosul



▲ Mary and some Christian friends helped Haytham get treatment in Lebanon after he was shot by Islamists in Iraq.

and began working to renovate it. But violence was on the rise in the city and across Iraq. In the preceding months, church bombings, drive-by shootings and kidnappings had put the community on edge.

As the Islamic holy month of Ramadan was coming to a close in November 2004, Haytham and his church members were ready to start using their new building. The night before the opening service, Haytham sat down with Mary to have a serious discussion.

"If I were to be martyred, how would you face this reality?" he asked his wife. She didn't want to consider the prospect, but Haytham pressed the question, reminding her that martyrdom is the price some followers of Christ pay for their faithfulness. He encouraged her to be heroic in the face of such a challenge, should it occur.

The next day, Haytham and his mother were driving to a nearby town to pick up some church members when, in his rearview mirror, Haytham saw a car speeding up behind them. He hugged the edge of the road to let the car pass.

Suddenly, even before he heard the gunshots, he felt the air leave his lungs. Then everything went white as the car stalled and rolled to a stop beside the road.

"I felt I was dying," Haytham said. He saw scenes from his life and heard Mary and the children talking. "Lord, please accept my spirit," he prayed, "and please take care of my family."

Then he sensed a voice inside him saying, "Just move. I don't want you to die. I want to use you." Haytham opened his eyes and tried to move, but his body wouldn't respond.

"Mom, what happened?" he asked his injured mother.

"They shot you," she said. Haytham had been hit several times. The most serious damage came from a bullet that passed through his body from shoulder to shoulder, partially severing his spinal cord and leaving him paralyzed.

The first doctor who treated Haytham asked him questions to keep him conscious. When he heard Haytham praying, he asked if he was calling down curses on the men who had shot him. Haytham's answer surprised the doctor.

"I wish I could meet them and tell them about the salvation of the Lord," he told the doctor, "so that they would not die in their sins and go to hell."

The doctor paused from his work.

“God, who is love, he abides in my heart, and he gave me love for all, even for my enemies.”

“I don’t understand you,” he said. “Don’t you want revenge?” When Haytham said no, the doctor asked for an explanation. “God, who is love, He abides in my heart,” Haytham explained, “and He gave me love for all, even for my enemies.”

Meanwhile, Mary and others at the church had become worried when Haytham and his mother did not return. They listened anxiously to news of other violent attacks in town, but they heard nothing of Haytham. Finally, Haytham’s father and brother went looking for them and discovered what had happened.

When Mary arrived at the hospital, she was shocked by what she saw. Her husband was lying on the floor unable to move, and the hospital was in chaos. Church members took care of Haytham themselves, feeding him, providing medical care and standing guard.

Later, word reached some friends that Haytham’s attackers were again going to try to kill him, and it became clear that the local hospital was not a safe place. Some Christians smuggled him to the Syrian border, and from there he was taken back to Lebanon for eight months

of medical treatment.

“People from all over the world were donating money to treat me in the hospital,” Haytham said. “The number of pastors and ministers who came to the hospital to visit me is just beyond imagination. We really felt how the brethren in the Lord love each other.”

The Promise of Peace

Haytham’s recovery was long and difficult, but he and Mary saw God use even his suffering to bless others.

“I didn’t collapse emotionally,” Haytham said, “but I had hard moments.” Six months into his recovery, a doctor told him he would likely never walk again. “This was the hardest word I heard,” he said. “It was like somebody shooting me in the heart.”

Haytham took his heartache to God. “Lord, You promised, ‘My peace I leave to you,’” he prayed. “I want this peace. As You said to Paul, ‘My grace will be sufficient for you.’ I want this grace.” As he prayed, he became increasingly confident that his experience and perseverance would result not only in

his own peace but also in the peace of others with whom he shared it. Throughout his hospital stay, he offered comfort and encouragement to both patients and hospital staff.

Today, Haytham has returned to church ministry in Lebanon, but he still faces many challenges. Until recently, he and his family lived in a fourth-floor apartment. Sometimes when the electricity was out, Haytham would have to wait hours before he could use an elevator to reach his apartment, or he would have to leave his wheelchair and pull himself up three flights of stairs. In addition, he can’t visit people as freely as he would like or stand behind a pulpit to preach as he would like.

“I was such a self-confident person,” he said. “I depended on myself, and the Lord taught me to depend on Him more.”

Haytham’s increased dependence on God has led to more opportunities to share the Gospel. “One of the things that comforts my heart is the ministry,” he said. “This is my source of comfort; it encourages me. So pray for me. We need prayer that the Lord will strengthen us and continue with us.”

Despite the challenges he has faced, Haytham now leads a growing congregation and hopes to continue in the calling he received many years ago. ■

▼ Haytham (below left in wheelchair) continues his ministry work today, leading a growing church in Lebanon and trusting God to sustain him.



From Nights of Horror to **DAYS OF HOPE**

Two Syrian sisters experience renewed faith while recovering from great loss.

When Rajaa and her sister, Samia, talk about the Gospel, their eyes sparkle. The joy on their faces, however, belies the suffering they endured after civil war erupted in Syria more than a decade ago.

"We discovered the real living God," said the younger sister, Samia, speaking of the newly awakened faith they experienced after fleeing their war-torn homeland.

"Jesus has changed my life radically," Rajaa added.

But even as the women share testimonies of God's salvation and restoration, the shadow of death from which they narrowly escaped is never far away.

The Outbreak of War

In March 2011, pro-democracy activists launched a campaign against Syria's repressive dictatorial regime, organizing massive demonstrations in several cities. Demonstrators were inspired by the "Arab Spring" protests in Tunisia and Egypt that led to new governments in those countries.

In Syria, though, the peaceful protests quickly devolved into armed rebellions when numerous rebel factions, including Islamist groups like al-Qaida and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), began fighting Syrian government forces. And as war engulfed the country, the Islamist groups took advantage of the chaos to target Christians.

Rajaa and Samia were from a traditionally Christian family and lived in a predominantly Christian area where Muslim extremists began their assault.

At first, ISIS fighters marked Christians' houses with a cross, and then they began shooting at the homes while hurling insults at the Christian residents. "They used to call us names like pigs and some very diminishing, belittling names," Rajaa said. "Of course, they used to call us blasphemous infidels. They wanted to Islamise us by force."

"They will take whatever for their physical enjoyment," Samia added. "They think they can use us for abuse, rape, whatever."

Samia had been married for six



months when, about two weeks before Christmas 2011, Islamists launched an attack near her home. She and her husband stayed inside as fighting between ISIS militants and government troops raged nearby.

After three days and nights, the couple ran out of food. And though sporadic fighting continued in the area, Samia's husband, Habib, decided to leave the house to look for supplies. That was the last time Samia saw him alive.

Samia was terrified when Habib failed to return, but she couldn't contact anyone for help because electricity and phone service had been out for days. She waited a day and a half before leaving the house to search for him. When she found his body lying in a street, he was barely recognisable.

"I started screaming and shouting and crying," Samia said. "There was nobody, no man to help me. I went there and started dragging him." Others slowly appeared and tried to help Samia, but then they urged her to seek safety indoors. "Leave him!" they shouted. "If you try to take him, they will kill you as well!"

That night, with the sound of gunfire still erupting around them, Samia and others from her neighbourhood fled on foot. Forced to leave her husband's body, she would never learn what happened to him.

Eventually, Samia reached her parents' home, but her sense of safety there was short lived.

Surrounded by Terror

In January 2012, ISIS fighters invaded the area where Rajaa lived with her husband, Fouad, and their baby. It then became clear why the Islamists had marked Christians' houses.

"They had a list of the names of the Christians for execution," Rajaa said. "Our neighbours came and told my husband

to get out of here, we have to get out of here. They want to kill Christians."

From inside their home, Rajaa and her husband could hear intermittent street battles that continued for weeks. During that time, they heard about Christians being abused all around them.

The Islamists executed some of the Christians, forcing them to stand against a wall with outstretched arms in the form of a cross while they shot them with automatic rifles. They also abducted, raped and killed Christian women, while torturing and burying alive some of the men.

On 7 February, the area around Rajaa's house was consumed by a full-scale battle. When extremists shot out the windows in their home, Fouad told Rajaa to take their baby into a back room and hide while he took a rifle and went outside to fight.

Fouad was quickly wounded and captured by ISIS militants, who beat him and tried to crush him by standing on top of him. Then they injected diesel fuel into his veins. After torturing him for seven hours, they left Fouad on the porch of his house so his family would witness his agony. Though in great pain and struggling to breathe, he was able to tell Rajaa what had happened before he died.

"They attacked him because he was Christian," Rajaa said. "That night he departed from his body to the Lord. He was really very courageous. He did not want to bow, except to Jesus. That is how he was."

During a lull in the fighting, a group of Christian men quickly buried Fouad

in a local cemetery, without a funeral. Rajaa then took her baby and fled to her parents' house, moving in with them and her sister, Samia.

As ISIS fighters gained control of more territory, the two sisters and their family were again in great danger. When Islamists tried to break through the door of their parents' house, Rajaa and Samia's father, Nader, tried to protect the family. The militants beat him but eventually left the house. Nader, who was approaching 70 and battling health issues, never fully recovered from the assault.

Around that time, the family learned that Rajaa and Samia's brothers, along with two additional male relatives, had also been killed in the fighting. "All the young men in the families were taken and mercilessly slaughtered," Rajaa said. In total, six adult men in their family were killed.

Within a month of the attack on Nader, the militants fired a rocket-propelled grenade into their living room, destroying the house. The family survived but were forced to flee on foot to a neighbouring country, where they believed they would be safe.

"We just ran with the clothes which were on us," Samia said.

Escape and New Beginnings

The sisters and their surviving family members were determined to get out of Syria, but traveling on foot with a 5-month-old baby and their elderly parents was difficult. In addition, they had to dodge areas of combat as they headed for the border.

"My father would walk half an hour



◀ *More than 2 million Syrian refugees have fled to Lebanon and Jordan since the beginning of the civil war. Local Christians in both countries actively help and minister to the refugees.*

and then he would collapse,” Samia said. “We didn’t have any men or brothers to help us to hold him. All our men were gone. We had Jesus only.”

The family walked for about a week before reaching the border, sleeping on the ground and surviving on what food they could find. “We were like out of our minds,” Rajaa said. “We didn’t even recognize days, nights, how many hours, how many days.” She said they could not sleep, and at their lowest point they couldn’t even walk and were forced to crawl.

Rajaa and Samia’s mother, Nawal, said she cried to the Lord for help during those difficult days, and He provided. “Even until now,” she said, “every time I feel very desperate I say ‘Lord, Lord,’ and I feel like a light shining in our darkness.”

After crossing the border into a neighbouring country, the family received emergency housing and basic supplies. Then they began to process the nightmare they had just escaped.

Samia had just begun married life when her husband, Habib, was killed. “I talked to God,” she said. “Why did You do this to me?” she asked Him. “Did I do something wrong?”

When she confronted God with her feelings, she said He provided comfort. “Every time I talked to God like this, afterward I felt very much at ease and at peace,” she said.

Rajaa’s daughter, Yara, now 13, never knew her father and still struggles with that loss. “When I walk on the streets, I sometimes see a father tapping on his daughter or cuddling her, caring for her, and I say, ‘Lord why did You allow this to

happen to me not to have a father?’”

The family lived in a tent at a refugee camp for two years, and their sorrows were compounded when Nader died of a stroke. Most of the other refugees were Muslims who didn’t accept them. But with help from the global body of Christ, they eventually found a more secure place to live.

A local pastor also started teaching them more about the Bible. “When the pastor told us all the Good News, I felt like I am a little baby,” Rajaa said. “I was really born again, like a little new baby. It was a spiritual birth, something giving me comfort, something new I didn’t know before.”

Samia described experiencing a similar revival of faith. “When we read the Bible,” she said, “we feel like a new birth is being done in our heart by Jesus Christ.”

The two sisters, along with their pastor, now regularly deliver aid and share the Gospel with Muslim refugees. “This is the first time I have seen non-Christians hear about Jesus and accept Christ!” Samia said, her eyes sparkling with joy.

Ongoing Pressure and Enduring Hope

The family still faces many challenges. They live in a Muslim-majority area where some men view them as prey because Christian women are often considered immoral; Samia suffered an attempted attack by a Muslim man.

“The Muslim men think maybe these Christian ladies are like the ladies they see on television and they can do whatever they want with them,” their

pastor said.

But despite all they have endured and their ongoing daily trials, the four women — the sisters, their mother and Rajaa’s daughter — said they have learned much about God.

“As far as I am concerned, ‘The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want,’” Rajaa said, quoting Psalm 23.

“I discovered that God will never forsake anybody who seeks Him with a whole heart,” added Samia.

Their mother, Nawal, said in turn, “He is our Lord, our Saviour, and I learned a lot from Him; He is supportive and patient and faithful.”

Finally, Rajaa’s teenage daughter, Yara, summarized a profound lesson: “I learned that our Lord is the only one who can continue standing near us during the most difficult times of our life to give us hope and peace and faith and joy and strength to live.”

The four women request prayer for God’s provision, as they continue to hope for an eventual return to their Syrian homeland.

“We want to go back and tell them about Jesus,” they told their pastor, wondering if they could somehow utilise their parents’ bombed, roofless home. “Maybe we could cover it in some way,” they suggested, “so we can start preaching Christ through our destroyed house.”

Despite, and partly as a result of, their deep suffering and personal loss, the four women long to share the hope of Christ with their countrymen who are in desperate need of reconciliation with one another and the God who loves them. ■

▼ Despite ongoing challenges, Nawal, Yara, Rajaa and Samia (left to right) joyfully share the love of Christ with others.





When Death Waits AT THE DOOR

Pastor Karwan and his wife both know that Islamists are less likely to kill a woman than a man in Iraqi culture. So when they hear a knock at the door, Karwan's wife nearly always answers. "In our home," he explained, "every moment we are waiting for someone to come and kill me. There is no moment in my life without this waiting."

The hostility against Karwan, often expressed by a blunt "We will kill you" message on social media, is a response to his online outreach to the country's overwhelmingly Muslim population. Numerous Muslims have come to know Christ through his website, and many others are clearly unhappy about it.

But constant danger is a reality for many Christians in Iraq, especially those who left Islam to follow Christ. Karwan was raised as a fervent Muslim, following a strict interpretation of Islam that closely complies with *sharia*, or Islamic law. He never missed a prayer time and was a regular fixture in his local mosque.

"I was very radical," he said. "I asked Allah to use me to share Islam among Christians. I had a plan to go to Europe and the USA to share Islam. I had an idea to go to jihad."

Karwan said his passion for "holy war" at that time was similar to that of Muslim extremists like the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), a group that has

killed countless numbers of Christians in Iraq and other parts of the world. "Jihad is killing people for Allah and to kill yourself in the fighting," he said. "This is a jihad."

Though a zealous Muslim as a teen, Karwan posed questions about Allah as a university student that none of his Quranic teachers would attempt to answer. "In Islam, it is very dangerous to ask about Allah," he said. "People say you are not good if you ask about Allah."

Karwan was tormented with questions. He scoured the internet and his university library seeking answers, even researching Hinduism, Buddhism and the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism.

Then he began to read the New Testament, and a sense of peace started to fill his heart. "At that time," he said, "I didn't know the source of this peace. But now I know this is from the Holy Spirit."

With no guidance or encouragement from another Christian, Karwan placed his faith in Christ. And as soon as he did, he began to tell his friends and family. Some thought he was crazy, while others became enraged.

"They started a fire to burn my books," he said, "especially my Arabic Bible." Karwan cut one Bible into pieces so he could hide it more easily. He still has, and treasures, that disassembled Bible that escaped their searches.

Although Karwan's family tried to force him to return to Islam, he continued to study God's Word and tell others about his new faith. He said his family felt deeply ashamed because of his refusal to return to Islam.

Then, one day the local security chief summoned Karwan for a talk. "Why are you living here?" the official asked. "You know radicals are planning to kill you. One day, they will kill you."

Seeing the wisdom of the man's warning, Karwan reluctantly decided to leave his hometown. After moving, however, he resumed his practice

"In our home, every moment we are waiting for someone to come and kill me."

of witnessing for Christ and growing in faith. And as he studied the Bible through a correspondence course, he felt the Lord leading him to start a church. "I saw a vision," he said. "I was around the graves in my dream, and I hit graves and people came out."

Most of the people who have become followers of Christ through Karwan's ministry are former Muslims who rejected Islam in search of the true God, who comforts souls. Many have been baptized, and his church has grown to more than 100 members.

Local officials, however, have closed Karwan's church several times. And radical Muslims regularly send him abusive and threatening messages through the internet. He said a typical warning is, "If I knew where you lived, I would come kill you." Someone once hacked into the church's website, deleted all the contacts and conversations, and posted a large image of the ISIS flag.

But the greatest threats church members receive are from enraged family members; several church members now live in hiding for fear of their own family. One woman told Karwan that if her family ever finds her they will burn her to death.

In the summer of 2023, a friend of Karwan named Youssef was killed for his faith. When some of Youssef's Muslim friends learned of his decision to follow Christ, they gave him 24 hours to recant. They allowed him one phone call, which he used to speak with Karwan. During

their conversation, Youssef told Karwan that he was determined to stand firm in his Christian faith and that he planned to share the Gospel with his captors.

"He was my friend," Karwan said in a voice choked with grief. "The radicals, they killed him."

After Youssef was murdered, Karwan reconsidered his pastoral calling. "I was thinking maybe the same thing would happen to me, because we are not far from that place," he recalled. In addition to threats, Karwan's family faces daily rejections and smaller persecutions that are also painful.

"I remember ...," Karwan said, "when my children said their friends said to them, 'You are dirty; you are very bad because you are Christian.' They came home and asked, 'Are we dirty?'" With tears in his eyes, Karwan recalled how he told his children, "No, in God's eyes we

are clean."

Regardless of the pressures that he, his family and his congregation face, Karwan is determined to share the Gospel. He regularly reminds his church members of Christ's example. "They were looking to kill Christ," Karwan said. "We are not higher than our Teacher. If He died, if He was executed, of course it will happen for us. It is normal."

Requesting prayer for the encouragement and protection of his family and church members, Karwan said he will not stop proclaiming the truth of Christ.

"Even if I am sure that we will die," he said, "it doesn't matter. We are like soldiers for Jesus Christ. This is our responsibility in this body, to share the Gospel. This is the day. Let's work and let's share God's kingdom." ■



► **Christian converts from Islam risk their lives to receive baptism. They are determined to identify with their Saviour regardless of the cost.**



Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Prayer Diary

July/August 2024

JULY 2024

| | | | |
|---|----|--------------|--|
| S | 14 | LEBANON | Praise God that children like Betul are experiencing His love through a youth programme! |
| M | 15 | IRAN | Pray that those addicted to drugs will find hope in Jesus Christ. |
| T | 16 | AFGHANISTAN | Praise God for those in the Hazara people group who have come to know the Lord! |
| W | 17 | CHINA | Pray for imprisoned Christians, such as Wang Yi, John Cao, Li Juncai and Zhang Shaojie. |
| T | 18 | CAR* | Pray that the civil war, which is causing mass displacement, will draw Muslims to Christ. |
| F | 19 | MOZAMBIQUE | Pray for Christians who fled Islamist attacks, as many know nothing about the welfare of their family members. |
| S | 20 | BANGLADESH | Pray that Christians in rural areas, especially former Muslims, will have access to God's Word. |
| S | 21 | TUNISIA | Pray for new Christians who are persecuted by family members for leaving Islam. |
| M | 22 | BURKINA FASO | Pray that attacks from terrorist groups like al-Qaida and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) will cease. |
| T | 23 | KAZAKHSTAN | Pray for Christians who lose jobs and educational opportunities because of their faith. |
| W | 24 | EGYPT | Pray for the continued success of Bible distribution efforts. |
| T | 25 | MYANMAR | Pray for Christians who are caught in the crossfire of the ongoing civil war. |
| F | 26 | DRC** | Pray for the children of two local missionaries who were martyred. |
| S | 27 | MAURITANIA | Pray for the courage and wisdom of underground churches in their approach to outreach efforts. |
| S | 28 | DJIBOUTI | Pray that Christians who have recently left Islam will stand firm when faced with persecution from family members. |
| M | 29 | AZERBAIJAN | Pray that churches will be able to register legally with the government and avoid harassment and fines. |
| T | 30 | KENYA | Pray for the protection of church buildings in areas where Christians are a minority. |
| W | 31 | BAHRAIN | Pray for unlimited print and digital access to God's Word. |

AUGUST 2024

| | | | |
|---|----|--------------|---|
| T | 1 | MALDIVES | Pray that the country's anti-Christian government and culture will cause Maldivians to seek freedom in Christ. |
| F | 2 | UAE*** | Pray for the few Emiratis known to have converted from Islam to Christianity. |
| S | 3 | IRAQ | Pray for local churches that minister to displaced Christians. |
| S | 4 | LAOS | When new Christians are accused of choosing a "foreign religion," pray that they will remain steadfast in Christ. |
| M | 5 | SOMALIA | Pray for Christians who are actively pursued and killed when discovered. |
| T | 6 | KUWAIT | Pray that those who flee Kuwait will find refuge among Believers in their new country. |
| W | 7 | OMAN | Pray that Christian converts from Islam will not be discouraged when facing legal challenges due to their conversion. |
| T | 8 | BENIN | Pray that new Christians will have access to God's Word, especially in rural areas. |
| F | 9 | QATAR | Pray for the small number of Qatari Christians who gather covertly for teaching and worship. |
| S | 10 | SYRIA | Pray for the protection of those distributing Bibles in Syria. |
| S | 11 | ALGERIA | Pray for Bible distributions, which are risky for the distributors and congregations involved. |
| M | 12 | TURKMENISTAN | Pray that Turkmen Christians will be able to obtain Bibles in their own language. |
| T | 13 | UZBEKISTAN | Pray that Atamarat, Zamira and their sons will have many opportunities to share the Gospel. |
| W | 14 | ETHIOPIA | Praise God that biblical churches continue to plant new churches and send missionaries! |
| T | 15 | CAMEROON | Pray for the comfort and healing of those traumatized by Boko Haram attacks. |
| F | 16 | JORDAN | Pray that churches in need of new facilities will find favour with the government. |
| S | 17 | TANZANIA | Pray for Christians living near the Ugandan border who have suffered for their faith. |

*CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

** DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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