



THE

VOICE



SPECIAL REPORT

OF THE MARTYRS



Because of the closure of some evangelical churches under the Assad regime, Christians gathered in homes for worship and discipleship.

SYRIA

CHRISTIANS CONTEND
WITH NEW WARNINGS

Syría has suffered through a brutal civil war between government forces and anti-government Muslim factions. During the conflict, which began in 2011, more than 750,000 Christians fled the country. Those who remained in Syria endured not only horrific violence but also restrictions similar to those seen in other Muslim nations throughout the region. But since the overthrow of President Bashar al-Assad, in December 2024, our Christian brothers and sisters in Syria have experienced the freedom to practice their faith in ways not previously possible.

One Christian who remained in Syria during the civil war pastored a church in the northwestern part of the country. In 2021, Assad's regime closed the church, and it remained closed after the pastor's death. Yet church members continued to gather secretly in homes for the next three years.

"We loved each other deeply and stayed united during the

TURKIYE

SYRIA

IRAQ

IRAN

JORDAN

SAUDI
ARABIA



Above and left: Pockmarked buildings and rubble are reminders of the nearly 14-year war between Assad's government forces and multiple rebel groups.

closure," a church member said. "The key verse during that time was Romans 8:37, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.' Our victory wasn't about possessions or even reopening the church; our victory was in Christ. And because we had already overcome in him, God prepared everything so that we could rejoice even more when the church finally reopened."

Following the overthrow of Assad, the church began gathering publicly again on 12 January, 2025. "We had been praying for God to intervene because my house was getting too small for everyone," the church member said. "When we returned, the church members shared the cost of renovating the building and buying batteries for electricity. We all felt great joy and confidence in the Lord. It was an answer to prayer."

While the reopening of churches and relative freedom

to practice their faith openly are hopeful developments for Christians in Syria, they remain cautious, still under the oppressive shadow of the new governing authorities' Islamist ideology. The interim president, Ahmed al-Sharaa, is the head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a group with ties to al-Qaida that is considered by some nations, including the US, to be a terrorist organization.

Front-Line-Workers report that the new authorities, who control public security, the military and the interim government, have increased the influence of Islam in public life. They have introduced Quranic study into school curricula and created Muslim prayer spaces in public places and universities. Muslims have also reportedly been distributing Islamic religious pamphlets in predominantly Christian areas.

"These changes ... raise concerns about the governing authorities' long-term impact," said a VOM worker. Another Front-Line-Worker reported that pastors in different parts of the country have been told by leaders associated with the government, "Just wait until we get our feet on the ground; then we will deal with the Christians." The VOM worker said the situation remains especially dangerous for Christian converts from Islam. "Many Muslim-background Believers are currently feeling fearful of being targeted," he said, "as the new authorities have adopted a stricter Islamic stance."

Some Christian converts from Islam have requested help in

leaving Syria, but others are determined to stay and minister amid the uncertainty. One such Christian is a Kurdish church leader named Abdul.

Abdul, who serves a church located near one of Syria's borders, grew up as a Muslim but came to faith in Christ in 2005. In 2014, he and his family fled to a neighbouring country after members of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) attacked his village, killing more than 6,000 people. He remained there for five months, enjoying fellowship with other Christians for the first time.

"Although I had been a Christian for 10 years," he said, "I had never attended a church or seen how Christians worship and pray together. This was a turning point for me. I learned how to pray, how to worship, and how to practice my faith in a community."

As Abdul grew in faith, he began to proclaim the Gospel to those closest to him, including two relatives, who also came to know Christ. Together, they returned to Syria in 2015 and planted a church in their home village.

"When we returned home, something had changed inside me," Abdul said. "Before fleeing, I was cautious about sharing my faith. As a Muslim-background Believer, I had always been careful, evangelizing in secret because I feared for my life. But when we came back, I was no longer afraid. I had a newfound boldness, and we began the ministry publicly."

Abdul began gathering with family members twice a week

"What started as a small family gathering quickly became a way to share the gospel with the entire community."

for worship and fellowship. And after they started a ministry for the children in their families, some of their neighbours began to send their own children as well. "What started as a small family gathering quickly became a way to share the Gospel with the entire community," Abdul said.

Today, Abdul leads the only church in his village, and it is composed solely of Christian converts from Islam. While he knows there are still ISIS fighters in the area, he remains committed to proclaiming the Gospel.

"We must continue to strengthen ourselves and not stop the work," he said. "One important difference now is that I am not alone. When I first became a Believer, even my wife was not a Christian yet. But today, I have a community of Believers around me. We encourage one another and stand together in faith."

Abdul said God's Word helps him to stand firm when he feels afraid. One verse that has helped him is Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the

soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Please pray for our persecuted Christian family members in Syria. Though they face an uncertain future, they continue to stand boldly for Christ. "Our eyes must remain fixed on the one who sits at the right of the throne," said the Christian whose church was closed by Assad. "I am ready, with God's help, to love those who persecute the Lord's work and his people. No matter how much we try to protect ourselves, God is the one who watches over us. I trust that he is with us." ■

VOM has helped Syrians who have suffered at the hands of Islamists. This Christian's destroyed farm is being restored.



Active “Because the Days Are Evil”

The Apostle Paul encouraged the Ephesian Christians to live in wisdom by “*See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” (Ephesians 5:15–16). Our Christian brothers and sisters in Syria have seen prolonged evil days — decades of oppression and insecurity capped by 14 years of brutal civil war. During that time, they have inspired me and many others in the global body of Christ through their faith and witness in the face of a hostile government and multiple Islamist terror groups, including ISIS.

Continuing his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, “*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*” (v. 17). His teaching is an eloquent description of wisdom as right action, based on right belief. We understand God’s eternal plan and that we are meant to sacrificially assume risk and even suffering to see it carried out. However, we remain unwise if we are waiting for a favourable time to act. Scripture teaches that we are meant to advance God’s kingdom immediately and always, including amid this world’s ever-present troubles (Ecclesiastes 1:4; John 4:35–36).

We work now because the days are evil. As the Syrian members of our Christian family have shown us, the Lord works powerfully amid tragedy. Syria’s civil war has resulted in a harvest of eternal fruit for God’s kingdom; Syrian Christians have called it “a revival in blood.” And a similar harvest for eternity awaits right now in the trials and turmoil of your life and my life. Will we see the opportunities and make the most of the time given us?



Since Syria’s civil war began in 2011, Christians have found eternal victory in Christ amid uncertainty and turmoil.

For more information about Christian Persecution in over 70 different countries, please go to: www.persecutionsa.org



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