



THE

October

VOICE

OF THE MARTYRS

MIDDLE EAST **WILLING TO BEAR CHRIST'S SHAME**

**BLESSED THROUGH
BROKENNESS**

**LOSING RICHES,
FINDING TREASURE**



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



Does your
church know
about Christian

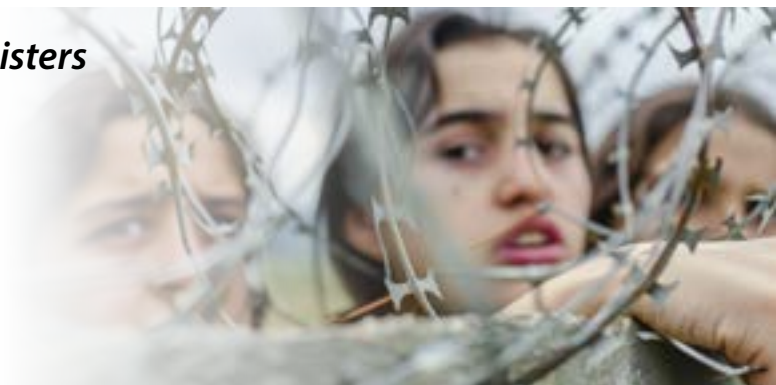
PERSECUTION?

Revelation 6:9-11 - KJV

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

***Let us come share about our Brothers and Sisters
in Christ who suffer for their faith.***

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Shame and Belonging

God created us for eternal union with himself and his other children. In Christ, we are one family united in loving fellowship that is forever existent among the persons of the one true and living God. It is this eternal love that is the fulfilment of our deepest longings. In Christ, we have the joy of loving fellowship that is anchored in an unbreakable bond of belonging which no persecutor can take away. Within the new covenant of Christ's blood, we belong to God — "I am his and he is mine," and we belong to each other — "I am yours and you are mine," forever.

Once we can see the eternal belonging and loving fellowship that are at the heart of the Gospel, we can see how shame and division are the works of our spiritual enemies, the devil and the other fallen angels, who are our ultimate persecutors. Whether our Christian brothers and sisters suffer violence at the hands of Islamist groups such as ISIS or suffer the loss of a job at the hands of an employer, the ultimate reality of persecution is our spiritual enemy's opposition to the faithful witness of Christ's love.

We must know the works of the enemy so we can encourage each other and train our children. It should be no surprise when persecutors say, "You don't belong" because this is the anti-Gospel of shame and division, the blaspheming of the eternal bond of fellowship God means for us. Through faith, we must know in the depths of our hearts that we do belong to him who matters most and to the entirety of his family — from every tongue, tribe and nation, from every era of history.

Only when we understand our eternal belonging will we, like the wonderful brothers and sisters we meet in this month's magazine, be able to not only joyfully endure but also brilliantly shine in the midst of the sufferings wrought by our enemy. We Christians, Christ's own disciples, can obey Scripture's injunction to "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." (Hebrews 13:13). We are blessed to be able to bear the shame of Christ. The Apostle Peter explains that we do so by walking in Christ's footsteps (1 Peter 2:21), and he, crucified in Rome during Nero's persecutions circa AD 63, meant what he said. So did Isac when he said, "I know they will kill me." Only a clear vision of the eternal glory of love and belonging can make such joyful suffering possible.

About the cover: Marwa and Sahir, who fled Iraq after militants with the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS) captured Mosul in 2014, look over the city where the Lord led them as refugees and brought them into a relationship with himself.

Click here to link to the website

www.persecutionsa.org

A Healing Journey *To Faith*



When Mosul fell to ISIS, Sahir was shattered by the torture he experienced. Then a joyful encounter with Christ transformed his life and family forever.

In 2014, Mosul, Iraq, was a dangerous place. The city had been overrun by fighters from the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). Thirty-two-year-old Sahir knew that even devout Sunni Muslims like him and his family could suffer their brutalities if they were not sufficiently radical to suit the ISIS invaders.

Sahir was faced with a choice of staying and enduring ISIS horrors or fleeing and leaving his home behind. Two of his brothers, a journalist and an accountant, had already fled with their families, and another was away serving in the Iraqi army.

After his parents insisted on staying, Sahir and his young wife, Marwa, chose to flee to a neighbouring country. Like other Iraqi exiles, who were denied even the meagre protections of refugee status, they found a cheap home in an unsavoury neighbourhood and attempted to restart their

lives.

But knowing his mother and father were in danger, Sahir was not happy. He returned to Mosul, determined to convince them to come back with him. A few days later, ISIS fighters burst into the family's home, searching for his journalist brother, who had recorded some of their murderous activities. When they didn't find him, they took Sahir instead.

For nine months, Marwa — alone with a toddler in a foreign country where she wasn't welcome — didn't know whether Sahir was alive or dead.

Answered Prayers

In the month that followed his kidnapping, Sahir endured tortures that he still cannot speak about. He said those seized by ISIS were routinely “thrown away” — discarded

“I couldn't believe that I was still alive.”

into mass graves or garbage dumps. “I felt that I was dying,” he said.

Sahir prayed in the name of all the prophets of Islam to be released from his imprisonment and suffering. “Before even knowing Jesus Christ, I was asking the Christian God, ‘I want you to help me,’” he recalled.

Eventually, Sahir was thrown away, more dead than alive. But he wasn’t destined to die yet. The garbage heap where he was abandoned, in the shadow of the ragged ruin of one of Saddam Hussein’s palaces, was near the home of a Christian family that remained in Mosul, undetected by ISIS. They found Sahir and brought him to their home, where they nursed him secretly until his health was restored enough for travel.

“The Lord helped me and he saved me,” Sahir said, thinking back to the kindness of that family, whose names he never knew. He recalled little of that month with them, but he did remember the picture of Jesus on their wall, the food this family shared with him and their loving care as he healed. “I felt like I was unconscious at that time,” he said. “I couldn’t believe that I was still alive.”

When Sahir was well enough for the journey, they helped him flee to the relative safety of Baghdad and helped connect him with others who could help.

In Baghdad, Sahir continued to heal, but he had more grief to cope with. He learned that his beloved father, after repeated attempts to get news of Sahir from ISIS militants, had been shot and killed for his persistence. Broken, Sahir started the process of trying to get back to Marwa and their daughter, all the while falling into alcohol abuse.

Months passed as Sahir waited for identity documents, working with overwhelmed bureaucrats trying to meet the needs of thousands of refugees.

In the meantime, Marwa lived in isolation. Not knowing her husband’s fate, not hearing from her own family in Mosul, and not allowed to return to them, she endured fear and abuse as a foreigner. But a kind Christian neighbour listened to her fears and offered to pray for her. One day she invited Marwa to church. Marwa was concerned the people in the church would reject her because of her *hijab* (Islamic head covering), but the woman assured her it was all right.

In the church, Marwa started to pray. “Lord, I know nothing about you,” she said. “I feel that I am lost, and I only want you. Please, Lord, I want to hear good news from my husband.”

Less than a week later, she got a call from Sahir. He was coming to join her.

A Family for Christ

For the first time, Marwa felt that God had actually heard her prayers. But she wasn’t sure at the time if the answer was a good one.

Marwa didn’t even recognize the man she saw on that first video call. Sahir was emaciated. His teeth were missing, his fingernails gone, his wounds still obvious after months of healing.

“Until he arrived in our home in exile, I couldn’t believe that he was the same person,” she said. “I recognized him from the tattoo on his arm.”

And the changes weren’t just physical. He was angry, despondent and abusive. When he was drunk, he would threaten Marwa and their daughter, even pulling out a knife. Marwa was sure he wanted to kill them. She began sleeping in her daughter’s bed with the door locked and later took refuge in a neighbour’s house when Sahir was in an especially bad state.

The couple had a second child, a son. But Sahir couldn’t

▼ Militant Islamists celebrate a victory along the border of Iraq and Syria in 2014. Attacks by ISIS forced tens of thousands of Christians to flee Iraq in the mid-2010s.



find any joy or peace, even in that event. For two years, fear and abuse reigned in their home.

Then one day an unexpected call came. A brother of Sahir's who had fled to Finland phoned and advised him to go to church. Three months later, he repeated his advice.

"Why do you want me to go to the church?" Sahir asked him.

"Just go," his brother said.

It took six more months for Sahir to follow through on the advice. He called a Christian man he knew for directions, got inebriated and headed to church.

"Yes, I was really drunk," Sahir said. "But I can really remember what happened that day. The pastor welcomed me and said, 'You are in the right place.' I really loved his smile. I entered the church for the first time on 15 November, 2017. I will never forget this day."

Marwa laughed. "He forgets the date of our anniversary," she said. But that day in November ended up having significance for their marriage as well.

Tired of living in fear and abuse, Marwa had secretly met with an attorney to draw up divorce papers. He assured her that when the papers were filed, the police and neighbours would protect her from the violence she expected. She was going to serve her husband notice that very week.

But that Sunday in church the Lord began to change Sahir, and Marwa saw evidence of it. On the following Wednesday, she went with her husband to a prayer meeting. Slowly they both began to know Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life that they were desperate for.

"The Lord changed me completely," Sahir said. "The Lord gave me a new heart, a heart of flesh instead of a heart of stone. This is my God. Nothing is impossible for him." His anger and alcoholism didn't disappear immediately, but both Sahir and Marwa could sense God's presence at work in him.

"I saw real love," Marwa said of the changes in Sahir. But she also noticed something happening in her own heart. "I felt that the Lord was reshaping me." She knew that the



◀ Even under threat from Muslim family members and neighbours, Sahir and Marwa (pictured with their children) are committed to serving the Lord.



fear both before and after Sahir's return had damaged her own soul, and she began to draw near to God for her own healing. The church prayed with and for them, and Sahir and Marwa both grew stronger in their faith and committed their lives to the Lord.

"Now we live the best life," Sahir said. "We are a family for Christ, and I believe that Jesus takes care of us."

Pray and Persevere

That "best life" is not a life of ease, but one of purpose.

"We live in an Arabic country, and it is not easy at all for Muslims to be converted," Sahir explained. As Muslim neighbours have learned of their decision to follow Christ, they have received threats and taunts.

Their children, because their parents come from Muslim families, are required to take classes on Islam and participate in the school's Islamic prayers. "The Lord knows the future of my kids," Sahir said. "For the kids it is not easy." In a previous school, the children experienced isolation and prejudice; in their current school, where the daughter is in eighth grade and the son is in third grade, they have so far been met with compassion by the Islamic teachers. In either case, Sahir and Marwa teach their children to pray to Jesus and persevere.

"We are thankful for the church," Marwa added, "because the church people equipped our kids and taught them how to walk with Jesus."

The reaction of Sahir's and Marwa's families as they have learned about their decision to follow Jesus has caused additional problems.

"My mother-in-law started to blame me," Marwa said.

In her ire, she called Marwa's father, a prominent sheikh in the Mosul region. She told him that Marwa was turning others, including Sahir, from Islam to Christ. His reaction was to disown his daughter and turn her into a fugitive.

"They sent me a message saying, 'You don't belong to us, and if anyone from this family sees you, they will kill you,'" Marwa said. The announcement of her apostasy has spread throughout their larger clan.

But the threats and difficulties have not changed Marwa's commitment to Christ. In her family of origin, she had grown up with wealth and privilege, but she never knew comfort or peace in her heart. "Now I don't have money, but I have all the comfort and peace, and I keep declaring that," she said. "Jesus provides us with all our needs."

Sahir's greatest concern is not what family members might do to them, but that their family members — apart from the brother in Finland, who had secretly become a Christian eight years earlier — are facing eternity without Christ.

"My family, they do not know where they shall go after death," Sahir said. "I pray that Jesus will save them and set them free. This is the most important thing in my life now, to keep praying for them."

Sahir wants to be trained to enter full-time Christian ministry. As a family they are trusting God's timing and leading for that work.

"Just keep us in your prayers," Sahir requested. "Pray that the Lord will protect us from the people around us and let us grow more and more, to go to the depths in our relationship with him, and to choose the suitable time that I may go to serve him." ■

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Losing a Career, Gaining a Calling

Samuel's financial career had provided a comfortable life for him and his family. But when his commitment to Christ came under scrutiny, everything he'd worked for was stripped away.

Though Samuel, 41, had grown up in a traditionally Christian family in the Middle East, he was not always a follower of Christ. He knew about Jesus, but it wasn't until he was 18 that he came to faith in Christ.

That year, Samuel noticed a Muslim coworker acting strangely, claiming that his own wife had demonic spirits working in her. Samuel became afraid and wondered how he could protect himself from demons.

On a bus ride home from work one day, Samuel saw a pastor he knew and asked for help. The pastor arranged for Samuel to meet Philip, a local church leader, who told him that God has a plan for everyone, that God loves people and that if Samuel put his trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit could protect him from demonic attacks. Samuel placed his faith in Christ the same day. Little did Samuel know the spiritual attacks that were yet to come.

A Time of Prosperity

Soon after becoming a Christian, Samuel was actively serving in his church and attending Christian conferences. One pastor encouraged him to pray about his future, particularly about having a family. After seven years of praying, Samuel met Miriam in 2010.

When Samuel first saw Miriam, he asked a friend about her and learned that she was also devoted to Christ and had a strong desire to follow the Lord. From a young age, she had prayed and dreamed about serving God. "I didn't know how, I didn't know where, I didn't know when; but I was praying about it," Miriam said.

Samuel reached out to Miriam over social media, but Miriam told him that if he was serious about his interest, then he should not chat with her online. She blocked him so that he could not contact her anymore.

A few days later, Miriam returned home from work to find Samuel introducing himself to her mother. Her mother encouraged her to give him a chance, and after a year of praying together, Miriam and Samuel were married in 2011. Their first daughter was born in 2012.

As the years progressed, Samuel established a lucrative career at a local bank, where he received promotions and raises. He served as an elder and accountant for his church, where Miriam was also actively serving. They lived a comfortable, good life with their children.

But Samuel felt God telling him that his time working at the bank was coming to an end.

Fired

In 2019, Samuel and Miriam's church started mission work in Turkiye (Turkey). A pastor invited Samuel to join them, and for the next two years Samuel took short trips to help with Gospel ministry there.

In 2021, Samuel took another trip to Turkiye. The first night of his stay, he received a message from his brother, who worked at the same bank. "What's going on? What have you done?" his brother asked.

Samuel said that he had done nothing wrong.

"No, human resources said you were fired," his brother replied.

Samuel tried to contact his supervisor, who didn't answer. Days later, a manager at the bank contacted Samuel. "When you are back from your trip, don't go to your office; come to us," he said. Still unsure of what had happened, Samuel asked his pastor and mission team to pray for him.

When he returned home, Samuel met with the manager as soon as he could. The manager interrogated Samuel about his travels to Turkiye, demanding to know what he was doing and if he was sharing the Gospel in the Muslim-majority country.

Then he told Samuel that having another source of income was against the rules. "You are not allowed to have commitments to the church," the manager told him. "You are not allowed to have another job because you are a banker."

Confused, Samuel explained that he did not receive any income from the church. And he paid for his own flights to

Turkiye because he wanted to serve God with his money.

The manager eventually acknowledged that Samuel had not received funds from the church, but he still brought Samuel to speak with the supervisor who had ignored his call from Turkiye.

"What have I done? What's the problem?" Samuel asked him.

"Leave the bank," his supervisor said. "Go to your church; let your pastor pay you." Samuel believed he had done nothing wrong and that he had the documentation to prove it, but his supervisor pushed for a meeting with human resources.

After the meeting, Samuel waited for several days while the human resources department investigated. Though he was nervous, he remembered that earlier in the year he had felt God directing him away from his work at the bank. "I was very anxious and overthinking, but I continued to pray about it," Samuel said.

Three days later, the bank's human resources department called Samuel back to the office. They had discovered that his supervisor was working with the secret police and targeting him for being a Christian. But because Samuel was considered a Christian preacher, the bank could not employ him. The bank concluded that the best resolution was to fire both Samuel and his supervisor. The bank owner also told Samuel's family he couldn't help with Samuel's situation since Samuel is a Christian. "If he was a Muslim, maybe it would be different," the bank owner said.

Samuel was forced to sign a resignation form waiving his



*“God, thank you. You have been with me for 18 years,
but now I don’t know what you want.”*

right to severance pay. After signing the form, he sat in his car and prayed, “God, thank you. You have been with me for 18 years, but now I don’t know what you want.”

Samuel said he felt grateful that he had been fired for being a teacher of God’s Word, instead of being fired for theft or some other wrongdoing. But the following days were very difficult for him and his family. They lived for months without a source of income. As Samuel and Miriam tried to find a job and sought financial help, they felt increasingly isolated and abandoned.

Doing God’s Work

As the couple prayed for God’s direction, they began to see a need for a children’s ministry to support and serve kids in their community. “I saw maybe 20 kids playing outside in the street,” Samuel said. “After that I said to Miriam, ‘We have many kids out in the street; no one is helping. Do you want to serve them?’ She said, ‘Yes, yes.’”

“God opened the door here, so we went,” Miriam said.

Samuel and Miriam began teaching the Bible to children once a week and started small clubs at schools and churches. Today, the couple leads 11 clubs, and people ask them for more.

The groups are open for any child to join, with their parents’ permission. Children from many different ethnic

groups and religious backgrounds have been learning about the Bible. Because the clubs are connected to Christian schools and ministries, Samuel and Miriam can freely share the Gospel without government interference. Many of the children who had never heard Bible stories before are now attending church.

“We have some kids, we see the fruit in them and they will be Bible teachers in the future,” Miriam said.

One of the children in their Bible classes graduated from school and cried when she could no longer attend the club. When Samuel asked her if she loved Christ, she replied, “I adore Jesus.”

Samuel and Miriam still face some financial uncertainty, but they continue to trust God to guide and sustain them. They request prayer for the children they minister to, many of whom face significant financial struggles. They ask that the Lord will continue to provide ministry opportunities and that they will be able to put together a team to help teach the Bible.

Samuel sees how God has led him through the loss of his job. He is especially encouraged by James 1:2 — “*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*” He believes that the Lord told him, “When you go to teach the children about pain and suffering, you will teach them with all you experienced, through all these years.” ■

▼ Samuel and Miriam (*not pictured*) lead 11 Bible clubs for children and youth. It is a joy, they said, to see spiritual fruit in these young people.





Prayer Diary

October 2026

T	1. Comoros	Pray that Comorian Christians will not recant their faith in Christ despite arrest or pressure from family members.
F	2. Bangladesh	Pray for pastors and other Christians who minister to those in the poorest slums in Dhaka.
S	3. Honduras	Pray for the encouragement of local Christians following the murder of a local evangelist.
S	4. Western Sahara	Pray for Front-Line Workers who share the Gospel at the risk of imprisonment.
M	5. Mexico	Pray for more Bible translations into indigenous languages and for greater availability of Bibles in rural areas.
T	6. UAE*	Pray that God will comfort those who are rejected and persecuted by their families for following Christ.
W	7. Mauritania	Only a few hundred local Believers live in Mauritania. Pray that they will grow in faith and boldness.
T	8. Eritrea	Pray for Christians imprisoned for their faith, like Kiflu Gebremeskel, who has been detained for more than 20 years.
F	9. DRC**	Pray that Islamist groups like the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) will stop persecuting Christians.
S	10. Morocco	Ask the Lord to strengthen house-churches that meet in secret, and pray for the discipleship of Believers.
S	11. Qatar	Sharing the Gospel with Muslims is strictly forbidden. Pray for those who do so at great risk.
M	12. Nigeria	Thank God for his provision of food, shelter and Bibles to thousands of people displaced by Islamist attacks.
T	13. Madagascar	Pray for Christians in northwest Madagascar, where radical Islam is gaining influence.
W	14. Tanzania	Pray for Christians who face significant opposition in Muslim-majority areas.
T	15. Cuba	Using 1 John 4:4 as a guide, pray that Cuban Christians will be overcomers in the face of atheistic Communism.
F	16. Libya	Pray for imprisoned Christians who have been sentenced to death for practicing their faith.
S	17. Tunisia	Pray for church leaders who face harassment and restrictions on their ministry.
S	18. Lebanon	Pray for Front-Line Workers who proclaim the Gospel in a dangerous, conflict-ridden environment.
M	19. Kazakhstan	Pray for Samal's Muslim brother Arman, who attacked her. When she forgave him, he was willing to hear the Gospel.
T	20. Guinea	Pray that churches will be beacons of hope and unity amid tribal violence.
W	21. Benin	Pray for the safety and effective outreach of Amadi, a Christian broadcaster.
T	22. Kenya	Pray that Christians who have lost family members in Islamist attacks will be comforted by the Holy Spirit.
F	23. Brunei	Bibles in Malay, Brunei's official language, are illegal. Pray that Bruneians will have access to God's Word.
S	24. UAE*	Pray that Emirati Christians will find fellowship that helps them grow in faith.
S	25. Cuba	Pray that more Bibles will reach Cubans. Pray also for the many new Bible discovery groups in churches.
M	26. Iraq	Christian converts from Islam are sometimes killed by family members. Pray for their protection and peace.
T	27. CAR***	Pray for pastors being trained to provide emotional and spiritual care to Christians who have suffered brutal attacks.
W	28. Malawi	Ask the Lord to give Yao Christians a sense of the hope, inheritance and power they have in Christ (Ephesians 1:17–18).
T	29. Malaysia	Ask the Lord to bless churches in Malaysia, using them to spread the Gospel despite government restrictions.
F	30. Mauritania	Pray that missionaries from other parts of Africa will feel called to serve in Mauritania.
S	31. Kuwait	Ask the Lord to encourage Kuwaitis who have been beaten or disowned by their families for following Christ.

*United Arab Emirates

**Democratic Republic of Congo

***Central African Republic



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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



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