



# HOPE AND A FUTURE

THE OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE

Young believers in  
the Middle East

A future of despair...  
or hope?

A photograph showing the silhouette of a person from behind, looking out through a large arched window. The window features intricate wrought-iron bars with a floral or fan-like pattern. The scene is backlit, creating a bright glow through the window and casting the person's silhouette.

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A FUTURE OF  
DESOLATION

OR HOPE?



## **Young Christians in Egypt are being worn down by relentless persecution. Rejected, despised and limited. Their faith – and the future of the church – is under threat.**

“I hated myself and I hated God. I blamed God. Why did he choose me to go through agony?”

Baher’s\* words are full of bitterness. His fury and venom towards God is alarming. But this is what grinding, relentless persecution can do to someone’s faith.

### **“I lost all hope in life.”**

All his life, this young Egyptian struggled against oppression, and his faith was chipped away year after year – until it reached breaking point.

The tragedy is, it’s not only Baher turning his back on God. Across Upper Egypt, young believers endure constant discrimination, humiliation and rejection. Girls are harassed in the street, children are bullied in school, and employment options are so limited that Christians are driven into the most dangerous, low-paid occupations. The devastating economic crisis gripping Egypt only compounds the misery and hardship.

The picture is reflected across most of the Middle East too, where persecution is robbing young people of hope and purpose. The faith of a generation is at risk of being crushed by persecution – and if that happens, the future of the church in the region looks desolate.

### **Life-changing injury**

Baher’s story begins when he was just 13. He left school to find work because the family were desperately poor. Like so many other Christians, discrimination meant he was forced to take on a

hazardous job in one of Upper Egypt’s limestone quarries. There’s no legal protection for workers’ rights, and no health insurance.

### **“Strengthen what remains and is about to die.”**

#### **REVELATION 3:2**

Baher would never have chosen to work in the quarry, were it not for persecution. “We operate machinery with blades that can shred a body to pieces,” he said. “It’s common for quarry workers to lose a limb. That’s in addition to the huge danger of electrical shocks due to exposed power cords, and the dust particles which cause lung damage and eye disease.”

Within a week, Baher’s arm was severed in a horrible accident.

“I blamed God because I did not do anything wrong, I just wanted to help my family!” cried Baher. “Whenever I looked at my one arm, I was depressed.”

Then, tragically, Baher’s brother died in the job too, thought to have choked to death on dust from the stone-cutting machines. Baher has tears in his eyes as he remembers, “When my brother died, my heart was torn apart and I lost all hope in life.”

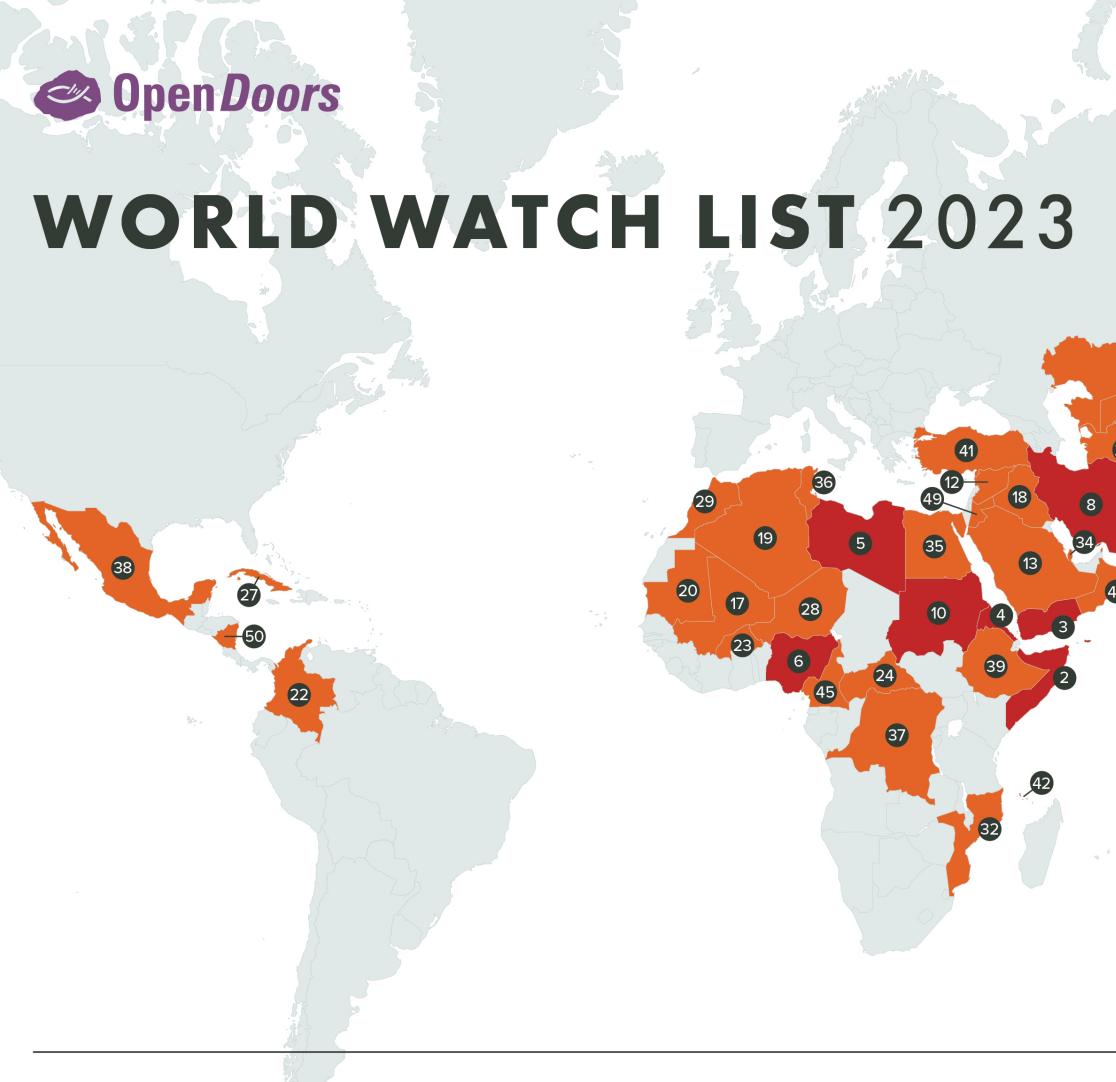
### **Shaken faith**

Persecution not only robbed Baher of life and hope, it shook his faith to the core. Alongside his trauma, Baher saw the homes of Christian families in his village looted and burned. He knew Christian parents who were afraid to let their daughters out for fear they’d be kidnapped by radical Muslims. He was rejected as he sought other work.

“Where is God in my life?” Baher raged. “Why has he forsaken me? Why has he chosen me to suffer such pain and become disabled?”



# WORLD WATCH LIST 2023



## ABOUT THE LIST

The World Watch List is compiled by Open Doors' analysts using real-world data from experts on the ground in 150 countries. Persecution in each country is recorded using a points system which tracks violence and pressure. This measures the number and severity of violent incidents against Christians and the degree of pressure exerted against the practice of their faith in 5 spheres of life.

### PERSECUTION

#### HIGH

41-60 points

For the third year  
high or extreme levels  
of persecution again

#### VIOLENCE



#### PRIVATE LIFE



#### FAMILY LIFE



#### COMMUNITY LIFE



#### NATIONAL LIFE



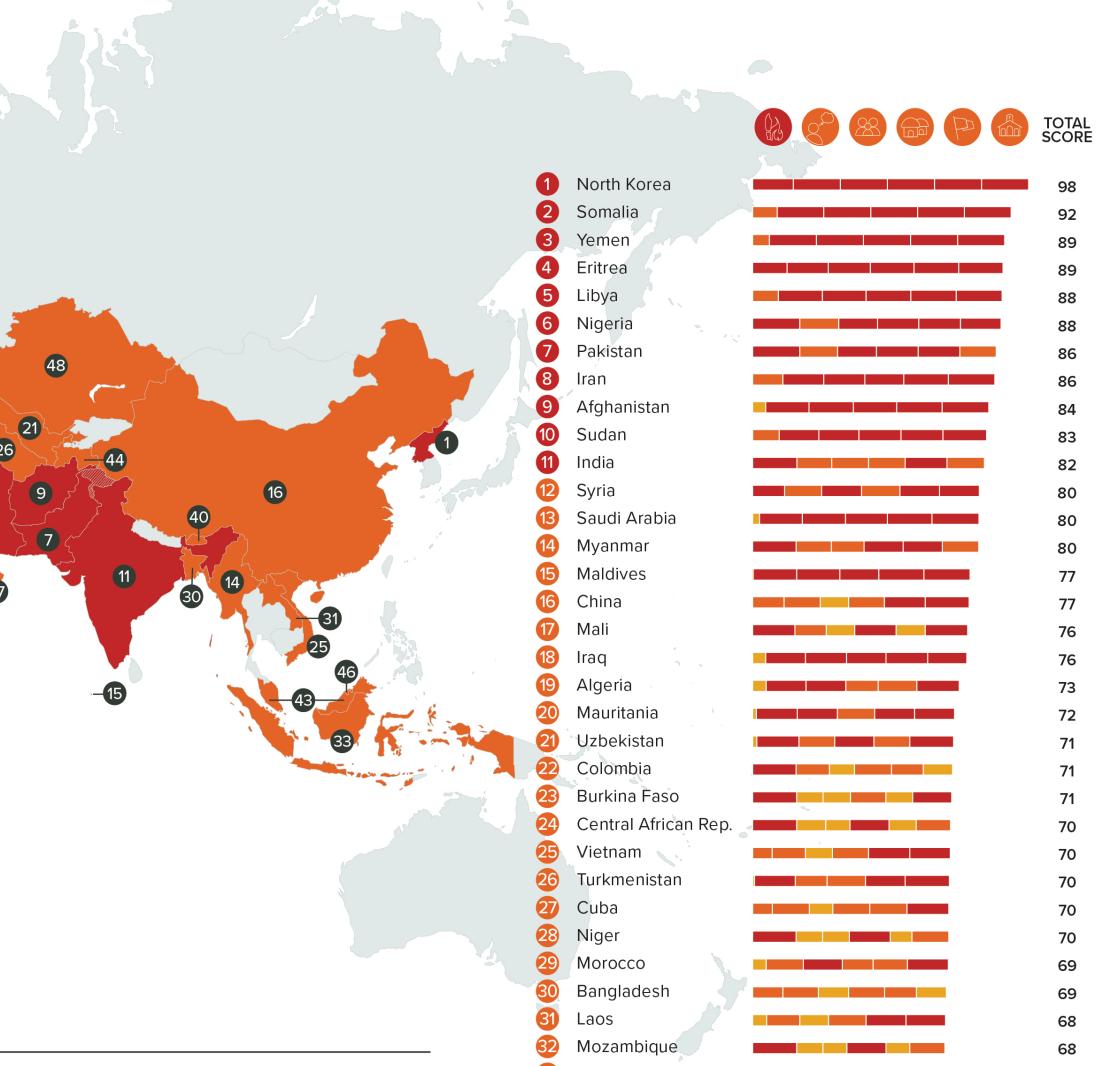
#### CHURCH LIFE



Maximum score for each is 16.7, maximum total of 100 when combined.

Each country's ranking is determined by its total score out of 100, giving an indication of severity of persecution.





## PERSECUTION LEVELS

• **VERY HIGH**  
61-80 points

• **EXTREME**  
81-100 points

In a row, every country on the list is ranked as having very high levels of persecution, showing the continued intensity of anti-Christianity.



**RANK**

1	North Korea	98
2	Somalia	92
3	Yemen	89
4	Eritrea	89
5	Libya	88
6	Nigeria	88
7	Pakistan	86
8	Iran	86
9	Afghanistan	84
10	Sudan	83
11	India	82
12	Syria	80
13	Saudi Arabia	80
14	Myanmar	80
15	Maldives	77
16	China	77
17	Mali	76
18	Iraq	76
19	Algeria	73
20	Mauritania	72
21	Uzbekistan	71
22	Colombia	71
23	Burkina Faso	71
24	Central African Rep.	70
25	Vietnam	70
26	Turkmenistan	70
27	Cuba	70
28	Niger	70
29	Morocco	69
30	Bangladesh	69
31	Laos	68
32	Mozambique	68
33	Indonesia	68
34	Qatar	68
35	Egypt	68
36	Tunisia	67
37	Congo DR (DRC)	67
38	Mexico	67
39	Ethiopia	66
40	Bhutan	66
41	Turkey	66
42	Comoros	66
43	Malaysia	66
44	Tajikistan	66
45	Cameroon	65
46	Brunei	65
47	Oman	65
48	Kazakhstan	65
49	Jordan	65
50	Nicaragua	65



Baher, a young Egyptian, is looking at a future of hope, faith and purpose.  
Now other persecuted believers need your support.

## Rewrite futures

Baher's future appeared desolate – but he also had another future, one of hope and purpose. It just needed someone like you to take him there.

### "We stopped blaming God, and worship him instead."

Thanks to your support, Baher is among hundreds of quarry workers who have received vital help from Open Doors' partners. A micro-loan helped Baher launch a new sheep-breeding business, and he enrolled in a discipleship programme to rebuild his faith.

"I was blaming God for the traumas my family had been through, but you supported us and

helped us get over it," said Baher. "Now we are thankful. If you had not backed me, I would not have changed. You lifted my morale and restored my relationship with God."

At Open Doors, we're driven by the words of Revelation 3:2, "Strengthen what remains and is about to die." Your support is urgently needed to encourage the faith of other persecuted Christians like Baher, still working in perilous conditions in the stone quarries. You can help provide them with practical support to remain in their homeland and keep the church alive.

Because when you give and pray, you rewrite the future for young Christians. You strengthen what remains. As Baher puts it, "We stopped blaming God, and we worship him instead."

\*name changed for security reasons

# Will you rewrite the future for persecuted young Christians in Egypt?

## **PLEASE PRAY**

- For Baher as he looks forward to a future of hope, faith and purpose.
- For persecuted young believers in Egypt, and especially vulnerable quarry workers.
- For the church in Egypt and the Middle East, that it can withstand relentless persecution.

## **PLEASE GIVE**

**Every PHP 2,350** will provide a month of medical care and support to three persecuted Christians.

**Every PHP 4,200** will train and disciple vulnerable young quarry workers, to strengthen their faith.

**Every PHP 6,100** will give financial security to a persecuted Christian family, through a small business loan.





# The future looks desolate for Baher's generation Unless we act

Egypt's young Christians are being worn down by relentless persecution.

Baher\* left school at 13 to work in a quarry, after persecution left his family desperately poor. Robbed of options because of his faith, Baher (like many persecuted believers) was forced to take the most dangerous work. Within a week, his arm was severed in a horrific accident. Then his brother died in the job.

*"I hated myself and I hated God."*

Young believers like Baher need hope. Not just in Egypt, but across the Middle East.

Because if this generation's faith is

crushed by persecution, the church in the region faces a bleak future.

**Will you rewrite the future for young Christians, to bring hope and purpose?**

**Every PHP 4,200 will train and help disciple vulnerable young quarry workers in Egypt, to strengthen their faith.**

You can visit [www.opendoors.ph](http://www.opendoors.ph) to know more, or contact us through SMS/Viber at 0998-8830821, or via e-mail at [philippines@od.org](mailto:philippines@od.org). Thank you!

\*name changed for security reasons