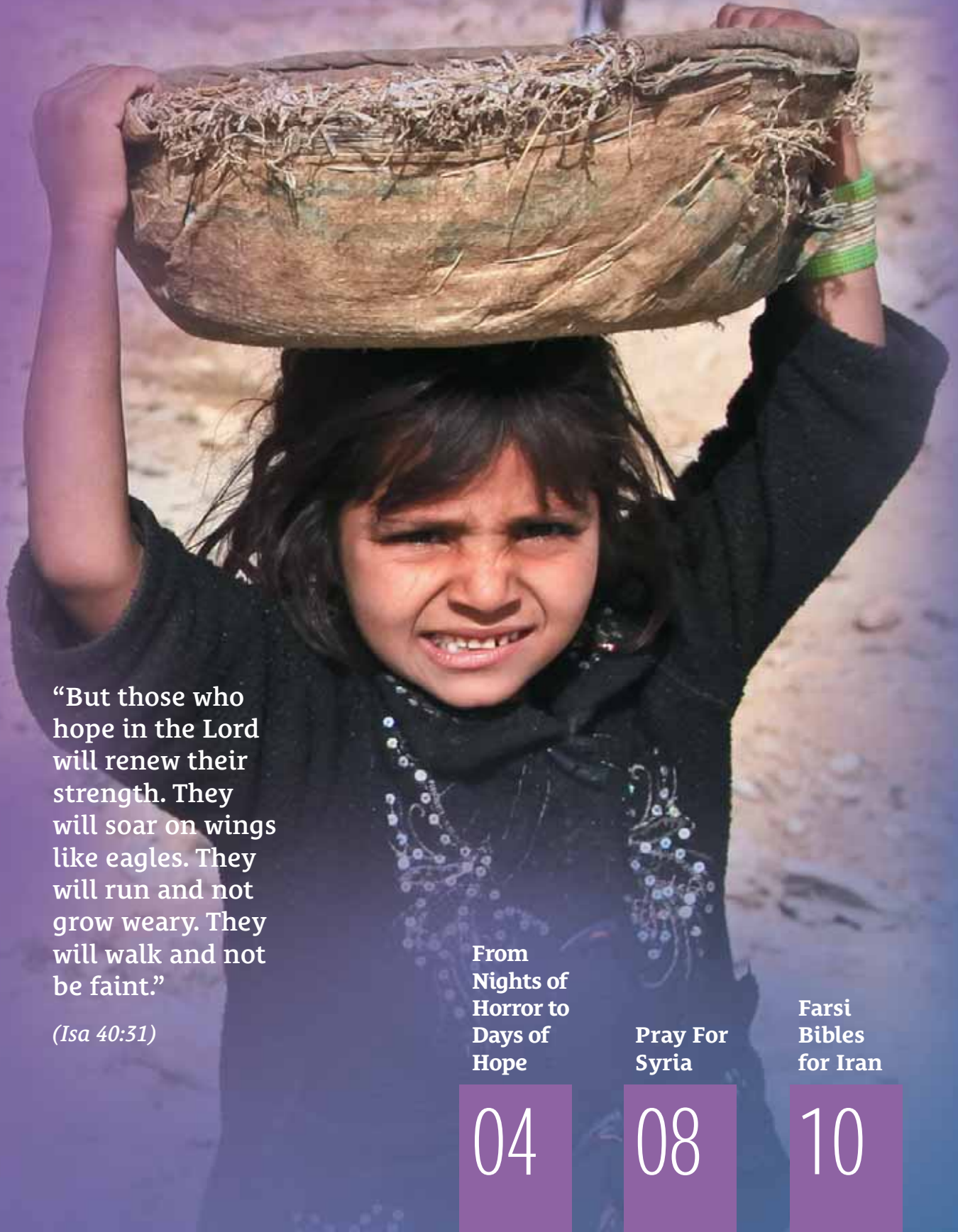


JUL - AUG 2024

STAND!

by Goshen International Ministries



“But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.”

(Isa 40:31)

From
Nights of
Horror to
Days of
Hope

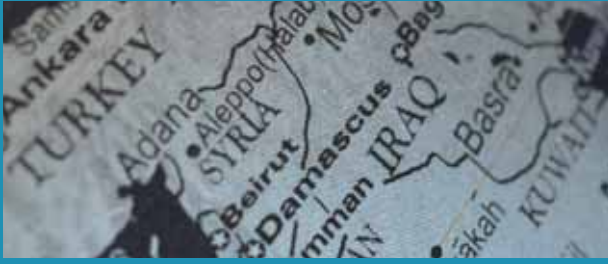
Pray For
Syria

Farsi
Bibles
for Iran

04

08

10



Dear Friends,

“Do not give up!”

Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the Champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Think about all the hostility that our Lord Jesus endured, and you won't become weary and give up (Heb 12:1-3).

In this issue of our Stand! Magazine, we feature the story of four Christian women – one who never knew her father, and three who lost their husbands during the Syrian war in 2011.

The husbands of these three women suffered horrific and unimaginable abuse and torture at the hands of rebel factions who seized the opportunity afforded by the chaos of war to persecute Christians during the conflict.

Despite what these sisters in Christ went through, they did not fall apart psychologically or give

up their faith in God. Instead, they persevered through the many adversities and emerged stronger in their faith. Find out how they did it on page 4 of our Stand! Magazine.

We pray that you will be encouraged by the Christ-inspired perseverance and resilience of these ordinary women to never give up or call it quits when life throws a curveball at you.

Do remember them in your daily prayers and support them by giving generously to the Persecuted Church. Details of how you can give can be found below.

Ephesians 5:30

**For we are members of His body,
of His flesh and of His bones.**

Blessings!



How we can serve you:

We will love the opportunity to visit your church or small group to raise awareness of Persecuted Christians among those in your circle of influence. We can share in your services or meetings, run mission booths and conduct interesting activities for people of all ages. By inviting us, you may be playing an important part to support our persecuted brethren.



Scan the QR code for a soft copy of the Stand!

WhatsApp us at **9788-0457** or email: **admin@gosheninternational.org** for more information.



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LOVE
Offering

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- 3) By Cheque issued in favour of **GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED**
Please mail cheque to: My Mail Box (Business) No. 880228, Singapore 919191

(For all love gifts, please e-mail admin@gosheninternational.org or WhatsApp 9788 0457 to facilitate our accountability to you. If you are giving towards a specific project or cause, please indicate the name of the project or cause in your e-mail. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions with respect to the projects that we are undertaking in support of the persecuted church. Many blessings to you in the Name of the Lord!)

From Nights of Horror to Days Of Hope

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.

“They used to call us pigs and some very belittling names,” Rajaa said. “Of course, they also called us kafirs. They wanted to force us out of our faith.”

The Outbreak of War

In March 2011, activists launched a campaign against Syria’s governmental regime, organizing massive demonstrations in several cities. Demonstrators were inspired by the “Arab Spring” protests in Tunisia and Egypt that led to the establishment of new governments in those countries.

In Syria, though, the peaceful protests quickly evolved into armed rebellions when numerous rebel factions began fighting Syrian government forces. As war engulfed the country, these groups took advantage of the chaos to target Christians.

Rajaa and Samia were from a traditional Christian family and lived in a predominantly Christian area. The rebels took note of Christian houses which were marked with a cross and then they began shooting at these homes while hurling insults at the Christian residents of these houses.

“They used to call us pigs and some very belittling names,” Rajaa said. “Of course, they also called us kafirs. They wanted to force us out of our faith.”

“They will take whatever they wanted for their physical enjoyment,” Samia added. “They think they can use us for abuse, rape, or whatever.”

Samia had been married for six months when, about two weeks before Christmas 2011, rebel groups launched an attack near her home. She and her husband stayed inside their home as fighting between them and government troops raged nearby.

After three days and nights, the couple ran out of food. 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 services had been disrupted

for a number of days. She waited a day and a half before leaving the house to search for him. When she found his lifeless body lying in a street, he was barely recognizable.

“I started screaming, 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 behind, she would never learn what had led to his death.

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

Surrounded by Terror

In January 2012, the same rebel groups invaded the area where Rajaa lived with her husband, Fouad, and their baby. “They had a list of the names of Christians they had identified for execution,” Rajaa said. “Our neighbours came and told my husband to get out of here. We have to get out of this place. They want to kill Christians.”

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

Some Christians were executed while others were forced to stand against a wall with outstretched arms in the form of a cross while they were fatally shot with automatic rifles. Christian women were being abducted, raped and killed whilst the Christian men were tortured and some were even buried alive.

On 7th February 2012, the area around Rajaa’s house was consumed by a full-scale battle. When extremist rebels 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. His captors beat him up and tried to crush him by standing on top of him. They injected diesel fuel into his veins and tortured him for seven hours before leaving him 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 a 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 rebel groups gained control of more territory, the two sisters and their family were again exposed to great danger. When these thugs 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 up 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 other male relatives, had also been killed in the fighting. “All the young men in the family were slaughtered mercilessly,” 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 only the clothes which were on us,” Samia said.



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.

Escape and New Beginnings

The sisters and their surviving family members were determined to get out of Syria, but travelling 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 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 only had Jesus.”

The family walked for about a week before reaching the border, often 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 recognise days, nights or how many hours or days we have been walking.” She said they could not sleep and at their lowest point, they could not 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 desperate, I say ‘Lord, Lord,’ and I feel a light shining into our darkness.”

After crossing the border into a neighbouring country, the family received emergency housing and basic supplies.

When they had recuperated, they began to process the nightmare they had just escaped from.

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, He would comfort her. “Every time after I talked to God like this, I would feel very much at ease and at peace,” she said.

Rajaa’s daughter, Yara, now 13, never got to know her father. She still struggles with that loss. “When I walk on the streets and I see a father cuddling or caring for his daughter, I would pray, ‘Lord why did you allow this to happen to me - not having 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 non-Christians who did not 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 the Good News, I felt like 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 felt like God was doing something new in our hearts.”

The two sisters, along with their pastor, now regularly deliver aid and share the gospel with other 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 an area where Christians are a minority. Some men view them as prey because Christian women are often considered immoral. Samia suffered an attempted assault by such men.

“These men think Christian ladies are like the ladies they see on television - 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 anyone who seek him with a sincere heart,” added Samia.

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

As for Rajaa’s teenage daughter, Yara, the lesson learnt is that the Lord is the only one Who will continue to be ever near them during the most difficult times of their lives - to give them hope, peace, faith, 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 others about Jesus,” they told their pastor. They wonder if they could somehow use their parents’ bombed and roofless home, cover it up in some way and start preaching Christ through their partially destroyed house.

In spite of their deep suffering and personal loss, these four women long to share the hope of Christ with their countrymen who are in desperate need of reconciliation with one another and with the God Who loves them.



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

Article and Photos from *The Voice of the Martyrs* as adapted by Goshen

PRAY for SYRIA

There are no winners in a war. How true that is.

The harsh brutality of war and the chaos that ensues from the massive destruction of property, murder, rape, kidnappings and torture, traumatize both combatants and innocent by-standers alike.

The negative effects on a person can take years to heal. Some never quite find complete healing.

At the height of the civil war in Syria in 2011, many civilians, including Christians, were displaced and forced to flee to neighboring countries, Turkey and Lebanon, to avoid the violence.

Before the conflict began in 2011, persecution was not a major concern among the country's Christian minority as the authorities held the situation in check. However, during and after the years of conflict and

turmoil, Christians were specifically targeted and persecuted by extremist radical anti-Christian groups who took advantage of the situation to perpetrate such persecution.



January 2020

Christians who fled from war-torn areas of Syria were denied entry into refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere. This is because most of the United Nations' officials working in these areas are anti-Christian.

As such, Christian refugees have had to live in hiding elsewhere where they are at great risk of being deported back to Syria or worse still, face possible death if they are discovered.

(Source: The Voice of the Martyrs, Canada)



August 2020

Believers and Christian converts in the Kurdistan region bordering Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq are also facing all forms of persecution and oppression because of their faith in Christ.

Radwan, a Kurdish teacher and headmaster of a Christian school in Afrin, northern Syria, was forced to hand over the Christian school building to an extremist group to be used for other purposes.

Radwan told them, "I will hand you the building only on one condition – Jesus Christ comes to earth again." He was subsequently detained by the group and held in their headquarters in Afrin. Many fear that he may already have been executed.

(Source: The Voice of the Martyrs)



PRAY:



That the Lord look after and preserve all those who love Him and frustrate the plans of the wicked (Ps 146:9).



That believers will be strengthened, comforted and encouraged by the powerful presence of the Lord in their midst. Pray that their needs will be divinely met in His timing and in His way.



For a mighty harvest of souls into the Kingdom of God as believers care for and share the gospel with those around them in spite of the immense challenges they are facing.



That the church in Syria and Kurdistan area will be equipped to do God's work and build up the Body of Christ such that they will be united in faith, mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ (Eph 4:12-13).

If you feel led by the Lord to support our brothers and sisters-in-Christ who are being persecuted because of their faith, details of how you can give can be found below.

Gifts for the persecuted church can be made payable to:

GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED

OCBC Bank Code: 7339

Account: 508-308962-001 (for Fund Transfer)

PayNow : UEN No. 198204059M

Cheque made payable to **GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED**

Mail to : My Mailbox (Business) No. 880228 Singapore 919191

For a direct deposit into our bank account, please email us at admin@gosheninternational.org or WhatsApp **9788 0457** to facilitate our accountability to you.

(In your e-mail to us, please indicate your name and contact number.)

Thank you for your generous love gift.

Iran

As Saeed Pakniat was growing up, he began to question the customs and beliefs that his parents had taught him since a very young age. He was skeptical about many aspects of these beliefs.

This eventually led him to explore the life and teachings of Jesus Christ through a Bible that his wife brought home one day.

Saeed's wife used to be very unhappy with her marriage life because Saeed was a harsh and nervous man who would often beat her up. Overcome with sadness and hopelessness, Saeed's wife broke down and cried while working as a night shift nurse in the hospital. A Christian missionary who saw her crying, comforted her and gave her a Bible.

One night, when his wife was at work, Saeed found the Bible and decided to read it. At about the same time, he also discovered some Farsi-speaking Christian channels on the television. He began regularly watching these

Christian TV programs where he learnt more about Christianity.

Finally in February 2008, Saeed decided to give His life to Jesus and to follow Him. Since then, he was able to sleep peacefully and was no longer plagued by nightmares. He was able to sense the presence of the Lord and a lot of good things started to happen in his life.

Unfortunately for Saeed, he had to flee to Turkey in 2009 and later to Canada in 2014 because of the extreme persecution he faced. However, he was able to pioneer an online ministry to Farsi-speaking people where he personally witnessed many of them come to Christ and be baptized.

Watch the full video of Pastor Saeed's interview here: <https://www.vomcanada.com/video/ir-forced-flee.htm>

(Source & Photo : The Voice of the Martyrs, Canada)



Project – Farsi Bibles for Iran

The Bible transformed the life of Saeed and his family, and many other Farsi-speaking people that Saeed ministered to.

Help us raise funds to print and distribute Bibles in the local Farsi language so that more people can be blessed, refreshed and encouraged.

Details of how you can give can be found on page 11.

May the Lord bless you abundantly as you give generously!

Project Save the Family



Hit rock bottom and still following Jesus.

Twelve families, made up of young and old, lost their homes, belongings and livelihood overnight. Just because they refused to renounce Christ.

Chased out of their homes and village by hostile villagers, these precious believers are surviving on the bare minimum thanks to the generosity and kindness of Pastor Yogesh and the house churches he is overseeing.

However, the needs of our persecuted brethren far outweigh the resources of the church. Goshen International Ministries wants to play a part in helping Pastor Yogesh to raise funds to help feed and provide a roof over the heads of these persecuted brethren.

“As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all people, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10)

If you feel led by the Lord to help these persecuted believers, details of how you can send your gift can be found below.

Gifts towards our current projects can be made payable to:
GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED

OCBC Bank Code : 7339
Account : 508-308962-001 (for Fund Transfer)
PayNow : UEN No. 198204059M

Cheque made payable to **GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES LIMITED**
Mail to: My Mailbox (Business) No. 880228 Singapore 919191

For a direct deposit into our bank account, please email us at admin@gosheninternational.org
or Whatsapp **9788 0457** to facilitate our accountability to you.

*(In your e-mail to us, please indicate your name and contact number and the specific project you wish to give to –
(1) Project Farsi Bibles for Iran, or (2) Project Save the Family.
In the event the target fund is reached, any excess will be channeled to the general fund which goes towards assisting persecuted Christians.)*



GOSHEN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRIES

OUR PURPOSE

We aim to actively serve the Lord and our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ around the world by praying for them, standing with them, encouraging them, helping them in practical ways and learning lessons of true discipleship from them.

Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ ... Whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone – especially to those in the family of faith. (Gal 6:2, 10)

Many of our persecuted brethren have lost homes, jobs, family, health, peace of mind and comforts in life because they refuse to renounce Christ. We can share their burdens and do good to them by giving financially so as to restore or regain some semblance of normalcy in their lives. We can also pray for them and write letters of encouragement to them.

Will you help to carry the burdens of our beloved brothers and sisters-in-Christ who are even now enduring fiery trials of persecution because of their faith?

Visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GoshenSG> or website: www.gosheninternational.org to find out how you can share your love, send aid and a message of hope to the persecuted Church.

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