

Prayer Ministry

News

September



Egypt

Roger from the Open Doors UK's offices recently visited Egypt and met with Ayman (*pseudonym), a Muslim background believer, who came to know Christ through the life of a friend.

Ayman told Roger how furious he became when he first learnt that his friend had become a Christian. "I was angry at first when I heard of his conversion, I decided to study Islam to encourage him to return to his senses. I even joined a fundamentalist Muslim group because I considered that most Muslims live a shallow spiritual life. I really tried to be a good Muslim.

A distorted image

"But I found no contentment. And I often compared myself to my Christian friend



Many Egyptian believers face challenges from their families and communities

whose life was full of joy and peace. I found myself in a vacuum. I wasn't happy following the Islamic way of life, in fact it made me miserable, so when my friend told him about the need to change and have a personal relationship with Christ, I decided to pray, 'God if Christianity is the way – show me.'

"God heard me and gave me the answers to my prayers and I felt the Lord working in my life. Stories from the Bible really touched my heart and I wanted to rush out and tell everyone that they needed to love the Lord.

Facing the mountain

"But soon, I knew the true cost of following Christ. As persecution mounted, other believers advised me to leave the country, but I knew that I would be able to serve the Kingdom to much better if I stayed".

"Many in a discipleship group that I was mentoring began to receive severe persecution. I can clearly recall how some of the believers were hung by their feet

and tortured with electric batons before being placed in solitary confinement. The police wanted them to become informers against us, but they refused. Three of the group were imprisoned without the right to a court appearance. Only political intervention brought about their release.

"God heard me and gave me the answers to my prayers and I felt the Lord working in

Challenges from the community and from families

"One of the biggest problems is encountered by our children. They are raised as Christians at home, but their official identity papers say that they are Muslim. This means that they must attend Islamic religious classes at school and they sometimes get very confused. We face considerable problems because of

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This edition of Prayer Group News...

features the Muslim world and highlights the stories of believers in different continents who face discrimination, imprisonment and physical abuse because of their faith in Jesus. Each of their stories can be duplicated countless times around the world. This year, 13 September marks the beginning of the 30 days of Ramadan. Please pray especially for Christians who live in Muslim-dominated lands during this period.

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the reaction of our relatives. Some believers are beaten and others are forced out of their families. My mother never bothered to wear the Muslim hijab before I became a Christian, but since I came to know Jesus she has taken to wearing the veil.

“My mother has never allowed me to speak to her about my Christian faith. But God always finds a way and now my daughter sings Christian songs to her.”

Please pray

- » For Muslim-background believers like Ayman who face intense pressure during the feast of Ramadan
- » For the Open Doors' co-workers who carry out vital Bible training with Muslim background believers.

Source: Open Doors



Police release Muslim-background believer to her fundamentalist family, who beat her and took her away, pledging to kill her.

Shaymaa (Eman) Muhammed al-Sayad knew that when she decided to become a Christian in 2003 her family would react with violence. She wasn't mistaken. Severe abuse and threats filled her life on a daily basis, as her family used every method at their disposal to force her to return to Islam. This included marrying her to a cousin who was an active member of the Al-Salafiyeen fundamentalist Muslim movement. Shaymaa knew she had no option but to flee the family home to find a place of safety.

Her life became further complicated when she met, and fell in love with a Christian man. Egyptian law strictly refuses to allow a woman born as a Muslim to marry a Christian man. It further forbids a Muslim

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to change their religion, although the Egyptian government states that their nation guarantees freedom of religion. Shaymaa made a bold decision. Obtaining Christian identity papers under the name of Maryan Eleya Saleeb her marriage was formalised.

A life of insecurity

Now, as she lived life as Maryan, she knew that she could never be totally secure, her relatives would always look for opportunities to snatch her back. Although she knew the danger, Maryan hoped that her life had permanently changed for the better, until the day her worst fears were realised. Walking through a fair in Alexandria she encountered the same family members who had previously abused and beaten her. Maryan fled.

Maryan desperately sought protection from local police, who took her into 'protective custody', allegedly to protect her from physical harm at the hands of her irate family. But her repeated requests to press charges against her family for attempted kidnap and murder were ignored.

Police interrogation

Maryan discovered that police protection was not what she had anticipated. State Security Investigation officials and local officers subjected her to threats, and severe physical and emotional torture. Her maltreatment included electrical shocks, beatings, and being photographed naked. On one occasion Colonel Abdel-Ghany Hamada of the Division of Public Affairs commanded four of his officers to beat her with their shoes while he interrogated her for hours about her forged Christian identity papers.



Muslim-background believers like these young Egyptian women are pressured to return to Islam

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After a tiring journey from police headquarters in Alexandria, Maryan was placed in a holding cell in Cairo before being sent back to Alexandria without explanation. Again, Maryan was subjected to threats before her father and brother came to take custody of her.

A forced reunion

Although fully aware of her family's threats to kill Maryan, the police failed to require her family to sign guarantees that she would not be harmed. Despite her legal adult status, Maryan was unable to obtain any restraining order to secure her personal safety.

“Although she knew the dangers, Maryan hoped that her life had permanently changed for the

Before being forced into the back of a family minibus, Maryan was dragged screaming from the police station and severely beaten in the Shatby Cemetery which is located directly behind the police building. Eye witnesses reported that her family drove her in the direction of Abeis, east of Alexandria, where her father's factory is located.

An eyewitness told Compass Direct “Currently, her whereabouts are unclear, but as a Christian community we are assured the best thing we can do for Maryan and her family is to pray.” Open Doors maintains safe havens in the Middle East for believers like Maryan. Co-workers who help run these, face serious risks of retaliation by Muslim extremists and from Egyptian authorities.

Please pray:

- » That Maryan will be able to escape from her captivity and find a place of safety
- » That she will find the Lord's peace through her ordeal
- » That under Egyptian law, believers will have their human rights respected
- » That both co-workers working in a safe haven and believers seeking shelter in them, will not attract attention from the Egyptian authorities.



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Indonesia

Pastor Petrus* is no stranger to danger, and is thankful that he is still alive today. For the last 10 years, his family have been living under the constant threat of death from Muslim extremists. The 46-year-old minister has been serving God since 1983 when he established a church in the Muslim-dominated area of Solo, Central Java province. His vision has always been clear – to bring new souls to Christ.

Since that time, life had never been easy. Despite much hard work and many prayers, the ground always remained spiritually hard. Petrus was only able to bring one Muslim to faith during the first two years of his ministry in Solo. Understandably, he was disappointed, so little to show for



Pastor Petrus

his efforts! But then he discovered that gradually, from just that one convert, a thriving church of 125 believers, mainly Muslim-background believers, had accepted Jesus - and Petrus soon attracted the attention of radical local Islamists. On two separate occasions, hundreds of Islamists ransacked the church premises. Some climbed to the roof and dismantled roof tiles, others broke windows and damaged the wooden floor. But thankfully nobody was hurt during the incidents.

Following the attacks, Petrus worked hard to gain the trust of the local community, and eventually the church was able to use the building again. Peace was established until October 2006 when a service ordaining new evangelists was interrupted by 200 angry radical Muslims.

Infidels must be stopped

Using the loudspeaker of a neighbouring mosque, a Muslim cleric urged followers to rise up against the church shouting "The worship place of these infidels must be stopped." Desperately, Petrus called the police who intervened. Muslim leaders agreed to suspend their attacks – but broke their promise.

Since then every church activity has been disrupted. "Every time Muslim radicals find out about our activities, they stir their people up through the loudspeaker," recalls Petrus. "Eventually, for the safety of the congregation, we divided into smaller groups that meet in different locations for worship services."

Hatred must not grow amongst us

Petrus and his family face constant death threats, but refuse to abandon their vision of winning souls for Christ. "It is by God's grace that we are still alive, but again, if we die, it doesn't matter as long as it is for God." Petrus doesn't hold a grudge against his persecutors and told an Open Doors co-worker, "I believe that someday a new apostle Paul will emerge amongst them. This is what I remind the congregation, hatred should not grow amongst us." Despite the pressure, Petrus, his family, and the congregation have not lost heart.

Source: Open Doors, * a pseudonym

Please pray

- » That God would protect Petrus and his family, as well as give them strength and wisdom in carrying out their ministry
- » For God to sustain the faith of Indonesian Christians during the month of Ramadan
- » For a new church building and for the Lord's favour to be upon the church as they deal with officials and religious leaders for permits.

For further news and updates, please use Open Doors' prayer hotline; 0800 2585101 Open Doors website www.opendoorsuk.org and the Open Doors' prayer diary. Brother Andrew's new book, *Secret Believers*, gives a deep insight into the problems faced by Muslim - background believers. To buy a copy call Open Doors' office on 01993 885400.