



# Serving Christ and His Suffering Church



# God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1)

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, Chair of the Board of Trustees, TBF Trust

The raising of Lazarus from the dead had a strange consequence. It led directly to the hatching of a plot to kill Jesus (John 11:53). The very fact that many Jewish people believed in Jesus because of this miracle of life caused the Pharisees and chief priests to start making plans to put Him to death.

How did Jesus react? He went with his disciples to Ephraim, a town near the wilderness, and stayed there discreetly for a while, keeping a low profile (John 11:54). Ephraim is believed to be modern-day Taybeh, near Ramallah.

The last remaining Christian village in the West Bank, Taybeh, which gave safety to the Lord Jesus, is now a place of danger. For over a year, extremist settlers have been encroaching on the agricultural land from which Taybeh's inhabitants earn their living. They graze their sheep and cows on the wheat and barley planted by the Christian farmers. No one intervenes to stop the Christians' crops being destroyed. Then on 26 June some of Taybeh's houses were attacked by settlers, who also lit a fire at the village's eastern entrance.

Not far from Taybeh as the crow flies, but in a very different religio-ethnic-political context, a Christian pastor and his extended family, numbering 20 people, were murdered on 15 July in Sweida, southern Syria. (Turn to back cover for more details.) Pastor Khaled was a convert from the Druze religion, and Sweida was wracked by a violent conflict that had recently sprung up

between local Druze and local Sunni Muslim Bedouin.

The murderers of Pastor Khaled and his family are believed to be terrorists from HTS.\* This is Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the Islamist militant group which seized power in Syria towards the end of last year, ousting President Assad. Their leader Ahmed al-Sharra is now president of Syria.

Today in many parts of the world, Christians are under attack. Homes are burnt; their inhabitants are kidnapped, maimed or killed. It is not just individual Christians who are targeted but it can be whole Christian communities. In this age of uncertainty and instability, Christians can be like a canary in a mine – the first to suffer and die when disaster comes. When strife and war and conflict are brewing, Christians are often caught in the middle, with no protector.

And yet we remember that we **do** have a protector, we **do** have a Redeemer, and that God Himself is indeed our refuge.

This Redeemer is the Lord Jesus who told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. There is no place for antisemitism, Islamophobia or any other form of hatred. Our God is love.

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\* HTS is reportedly disbanded now, but in the ever-shifting mix of Islamist terrorist groups in Syria, who often change their names and their allegiances, it is hard to say whether HTS has really disappeared or not.

# What TBF Trust is doing by God's grace and with your gifts

## Bringing joy now and a future hope to Christian students in Bangladesh

"Many times, I cried out to God, praying that He would look upon our family with mercy and provide a way for us to continue our education," writes Kripa Sen, a young Christian woman in Bangladesh. She is in her second year at college, studying humanities, with financial help from TBF Trust channelled through the Bible Students Fellowship of Bangladesh (BSFB).



◀ *Kripa's prayers have been answered, through the generous help of TBF Trust supporters*

"In May, God graciously answered my prayers. I came to know through our local BSFB group that BSFB would be providing a monthly scholarship of 2,000 Taka (£12; €14). I was overjoyed. This scholarship has helped me immensely—it has covered my college tuition fees and transportation expenses. It has taken a huge burden off my father's shoulders. Our entire family is very grateful, and this support has brought us so much joy."

Kripa lives in a village near Cox's Bazar. Her father is a day labourer, hiring himself out for work day by day, with no certainty of any wages on any particular day.

It is very difficult for Christian young people from such impoverished families

to continue to tertiary education. Yet, if they can manage it, their lives, their families and their whole Christian community will be transformed.

"For me, BSFB is a place of blessing," says Kripa. "I have found salvation through BSFB, and now I am also receiving financial support that is making a real difference in my life."

### A light in the darkness

Another student being supported with a TBFT-funded scholarship is Shoyon Majumdar. He is in his first year studying nursing.

Shoyon's father, like Kripa's father, is a day labourer earning such a small income that it is difficult to cover the daily needs of the family, let alone the cost of higher education.

"In such a difficult situation, BSFB came alongside me like a light in the darkness," says Shoyon. "They extended financial support at just the right time, which has been a great blessing. Through their support, I have been able to continue my education with less worry and more focus."



◀ *Shoyon says the scholarship came at just the right time "like a light in the darkness"*

“First and foremost, I give thanks to God, who is our Provider and who hears our prayers. I also sincerely thank BSFB, through whom God has worked to bless me. Their support has encouraged me deeply, and I feel more hopeful for the future.”

The Christian students whom BSFB have selected to receive scholarships funded by TBF Trust include some who are first generation converts to Christianity. All of them are in desperate

need of financial support and would probably have to give up their studies without the scholarship. The subjects they are studying include science, social science, nursing, humanities, management, business studies and humanities.

Please pray for them that they will glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in their studies, and that He will strengthen them to face the discrimination or harassment they are likely to encounter as Christians.

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## CCTV protects Christians at risk of persecution in Kyrgyzstan

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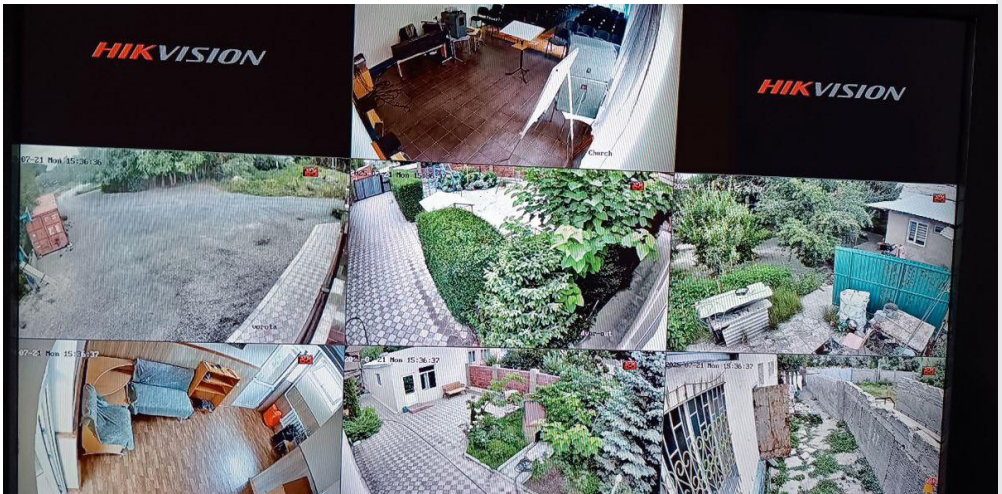
TBF Trust has given funds to help a congregation in a strongly Islamic area of Kyrgyzstan purchase surveillance cameras for their church building.

Radical Islam is on the rise, meaning that Christian people and church buildings are at increasing risk.

This particular church suffered an armed attack some years ago. The police urged them to install cameras to protect both the building and the Christians who use it.

Soon after being installed, the cameras came in useful when a neighbour’s child used a nail to scratch the car of one of the Christians. This small incident means that everyone locally is now aware of the church’s extra level of protection, which “gives us an additional feeling of safety” say the church leaders.

Pray that, with the presence of the CCTV and the protection of the Lord, our brothers and sisters will be able to live out their Christian faith without harassment or violent attacks.



▲ Cameras showing what is happening both outdoors and indoors have increased security for a church in an area where Christians face much hostility

# Standing on the Graves: Unmasking the Plight of West Africa's Persecuted Christians

In June and July 2025 West Africa witnessed a distressing surge in violence, particularly against Christian communities. One of the most heart-wrenching episodes occurred in Yelwata, Benue State, Nigeria, with a coordinated attack by Fulani extremists on the night of 13-14 June. Yelwata, a predominantly Christian farming community, became the latest victim of a pattern that has now become painfully familiar across Nigeria's Middle Belt and beyond. Over 200 individuals were reportedly killed, including a young pharmacy graduate. Eyewitnesses recounted how the attackers chanted "Allahu Akbar" while burning down homes and food stores worth over ₦27 million (approximately £13,000, €15,000), deliberately targeting the people's source of livelihood.

While the Nigerian Inspector General of Police cited 47 deaths and 100 displacements, local activists and survivors provided much higher figures. Bodies were found charred in homes, on the streets, and even in churches. In one house alone, 40 people were slaughtered. In another, 30 people lost their lives. What was found at daybreak was a flood of blood in some houses. Pregnant women and the elderly were not spared.

This atrocity is not isolated. The Fulani extremists crisis has evolved from spontaneous clashes into what survivors now see as systematic, militarised, and religiously motivated terror. The protesters in Benue were clear in their message. "We are standing on the dead bodies of our mothers, children and fathers," cried Mimidoo Williams, one of the protest leaders. She added



▲ A bereaved mother-in-law and daughter-in-law from Zikke village bow their heads in prayer. The father and son to whom they were married were both killed in the attack in April. The younger widow is pregnant

that more than 5,000 people had been displaced in Benue alone since 2024. Protesters held placards and wept publicly. Some walked with women and children who were left homeless and traumatised.

This pattern of violence is not limited to Nigeria. In Mali the national army recently claimed victory against jihadists by capturing a key ISIS leader. Similar stories of Islamist violence have emerged from Burkina Faso, where Christian villages have been attacked, and Niger, where churches have been torched. The spread of jihadist groups in the Sahel and the weakening of state authority have made Christians and religious minorities easy targets.

*Continued on page 7* ▶

# Here is my gift to provide practical help for persecuted Christians.

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**TBF Trust will not give your name or contact details to anyone else.**

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Card number

Expiry date  /  CVV  Signature .....

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I do not require an acknowledgement of this gift.

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Marlborough Road, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5NU**

Zikke village in Plateau State has been repeatedly attacked, its buildings burned, its people killed ▼



► Continued from page 5

Why is Benue, in particular, under constant siege? Two key reasons emerge: religion and land. Benue is Nigeria's "food basket", with vast fertile lands that support a thriving farming economy. Survivors insist that the attacks are both an economic conquest and a religious persecution.

Despite warnings issued by the Fulani extremists before the attacks, security forces failed to respond decisively.

As the region mourns, one truth rings clear: the blood of West Africa's innocents is crying out for justice. Until there is a robust national and international response, Christian communities in Nigeria and across the region will continue to pay with their lives.

■ **Dr Godwin Adeboye, Nigeria**

## Theology of the Mass Grave: Death Without Justice

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"What I encountered was not just tragedy but erasure: homes flattened, food stores looted and burned, bodies charred beyond recognition, and children crying from hunger with no mother left to feed them." Dr Godwin Adeboye wrote these words to TBF Trust after visiting Zikke village in Gwall district, Bassa Local Government Area in Plateau State, Nigeria in May. A month earlier the village had suffered yet another orchestrated attack by extremist militants. This time 53 Christians were killed. Villagers described to him precisely timed, military-style raids. "Entire families were eliminated, some while still asleep. One father, mother, and four children were found locked in an embrace, burned to ashes in what used to be their sitting room." Not only homes but also food stores and shops were specifically targeted and torched "leaving nothing behind but hunger and ash. Children now rummage through ruins for scraps, and mothers boil leaves to feed infants."

"The community led me to a graveyard hastily dug after the massacre. Fifty-one corpses were buried together—many burned so severely they could not be identified. One burial pit, still moist with blood, had charred bones protruding from the soil. Entire households were lowered into the earth together, leaving no one behind to mourn them ... This mass grave is not only a tomb—it is a monument of unacknowledged martyrdom. There is no official memorial, no government recognition, no compensation. Only grief, and the collective memory of those who refuse to let their dead be forgotten."

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# Pastor and his extended family murdered in Syria

Terrorists, believed to be from HTS, have killed Khaled Mazhar, the beloved pastor of the Good Shepherd Evangelical Church in Sweida, southern Syria, along with his entire family: his wife, children, siblings and parents. Twenty lives were lost in the attack which took place on 15 July 2025, in the midst of a period of bitter violence in Sweida. The conflict was between local Arabs of two different religions - Sunni Muslims and Druze.

The Druze religion began as an off-shoot of Ismaili Islam in the eleventh century AD, but became so different from Islam that it is generally considered a separate religion. It emphasises monotheism and reincarnation.



▲ Pastor Khaled was murdered, along with his entire extended family

Pastor Khaled was originally a Druze and but that left that religion to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray for his grieving church members and for an end to all violence in the Middle East.



## Have you got your TBF Trust prayer diary for August-September?

Please contact the TBFT office (see page 7) to request your copy or for extra copies to give your Christian friends.

## Could you leave a legacy to TBF Trust?

May we invite you prayerfully to consider including a legacy to TBF Trust when you write your will? If the Lord leads you to care for persecuted Christians in this way, you could use the following wording: *"I give to TBF Trust (registered charity number 271602) at Unit 2, Fordbrook Business Centre, Marlborough Road, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5NU the sum of £..... (free of all taxes) for its general purposes and I declare that the receipt of the Treasurer or other authorised officer will be a sufficient discharge to my executor(s)."* Alternatively, your legacy could be expressed as a percentage of your estate.

*Front cover image: TBF Trust is helping Kripa Sen and other Christian students from poor families in Bangladesh to continue their studies. With college or university qualifications their lives will be transformed and their families and all the Christian community will be strengthened. Turn to page 3 to read more.*



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