

AFRIGO

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SERVING AMID
DANGER

TRIBULATION AND TESTIMONY

PERSECUTION AND MISSIONS

A PAINFUL BUT POWERFUL
WITNESS

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FROM PROTECTION TO PREPARATION

BY AUGUSTIN LONGA

According to the 2026 Open Doors World Watch List, 20 of the 50 countries where Christians face the most severe persecution are in Africa, with five sitting in the top 10.¹ Nowhere is this reality more staggering than in Nigeria, which now accounts for a heart-breaking 72 per cent of all faith-related Christian killings globally. Of the 4,849 believers martyred worldwide last year, 3,490 were targeted on Nigerian soil.² For the African Church, hostility is no longer peripheral or a distant headline; it is the primary geographic context of modern missions. Yet, as pressure intensifies across our continent, the global Church's default response relies heavily on a well-worn toolbox: immediate extraction, humanitarian aid, and high-level political advocacy.

While these interventions are crucial during acute, life-threatening crises, an over-reliance on them exposes a strategic vulnerability. When our primary instinct is to evacuate or insulate, we treat persecution as a disaster to be avoided rather than a crucible where indigenous movements must learn to survive and multiply. To move forward, we must examine our current assumptions and rethink what it means to stand with the suffering Church.

The first step is recognizing that we often misdiagnose the nature of the pressure itself. Christian initiatives treat persecution as a monolith, failing to differentiate between its two primary dimensions: vertical and horizontal. Vertical persecution is top-down, institutional, and political. Horizontal persecution, by contrast, is sociological, communal, and relational, with the family at its centre. It manifests as familial rejection, economic strangulation, and intense social isolation.

When vertical persecution dominates the stage, our strategies default to advocacy and rescue. In doing so, we miss the daily, lived reality of the frontline worker. Worse, applying macro-political tools to local communal wounds of persecution reduces our capacity for genuine empathy. By focusing on self-defence, safety, and physical relocation, our response can become self-centred.

True missiological resilience requires a Christ-like paradigm shift: we must look past our own defence mechanisms and view the persecutor not merely as an existential threat, but as a spiritual victim blinded by hostility. As argued in my recent doctoral research, unlocking a supernatural capacity for empathy rather than retaliation requires a new model of leadership: the persecuted-accompanist. When local believers and missionaries are equipped to stay as companions who suffer alongside their people rather than being extracted, they mirror Christ's posture on the cross. This posture reframes the persecutor as a soul in need of redemption, transforming a site of suffering into a frontier for the gospel.

The way forward requires the African Church to outgrow what can be described as a "kindergarten posture" that treats persecuted believers as fragile dependents who must be shielded from hardship at all costs. This mindset stunts spiritual maturity, resilience, and leadership multiplication. Instead, the Church must become an "equipping centre", not merely issuing evacuation tickets; but instead, providing the theological, emotional, and structural support required to endure, adapt, and anchor grassroots gospel movements within hostile environments. Persecution does not close doors; it refines the messengers.

Let us read this issue of AfriGO as a manual for courage as we build resilient, indigenous leaders capable of standing firm and extending Christ's love in the heat of the fire.

Dr Augustin Longa is an author, researcher, and consultant specializing in leadership development and organizational coaching within restricted-access contexts. As an educator and missiologist, his work focuses on building resilient, indigenous leadership models that thrive amid persecution without relying on external extraction. He founded the Pan-African Institute of Missions and Intercultural Studies (PIMIS) and currently serves as director of the West Africa Missionary Movements (WAMM). He is Cameroonian and resides in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

¹ <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>

² <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/persecution-trends/>

CALLED TO CHINA

I am originally from West Africa, and I live in China as a Christian. As a foreigner, I am allowed to practice my faith within limits. I can attend a registered church for foreigners, worship and pray, and invite other foreigners to my home to study the Bible. I am not allowed, however, to invite Chinese people to follow Jesus. It is illegal.

I initially went to China as a student, and although I thought myself a Christian, it was not until I returned home that I really encountered Christ and started to grow in my faith. When I went back to work in China, I was excited to renew my friendship with an older Chinese brother who used to read the Bible with me. I reached out to him on WeChat to inform him that I had received some training in discipleship that I wanted to share with him. Initially, he seemed excited, but soon afterwards

he stopped returning my messages. The woman who introduced us went silent and blocked me.

Chinese people live under intense scrutiny from their government. Movement is tracked through their phones, and facial recognition cameras are installed across cities and in buildings. The government believes that the Communist Party should be the ultimate authority over the lives and actions of its citizens. This translates into harsh restrictions on religious people who have a higher loyalty to God.

Registered churches are called the “The Three-Self Patriotic Movement” and services are held in large, visible buildings under strict state oversight. The pastors are approved by the government, and the theology is adapted to fall in line with socialist values. Many true Christians attending

these churches are doing the best they can to live their faith under these restrictions. However, anyone under 18 years of age is barred from attending services or Sunday School, even in a registered church.

Publicly, the government says that there is religious freedom, but in practice, religious activities are closely monitored. Foreign students could have a religious meeting, but it is necessary to get permission for anything outside of your own room or apartment, and there can be a lot of red tape to navigate to get authorization.

Unregistered churches are called “underground” or “house churches”, although some are large churches. The government was once more relaxed about religious activities, but in 2018, revisions to religious regulations made it illegal for any religious activity to take place outside of government control. Since then, Christians have faced more arrests, restrictions, and even the demolition of churches. Refusal to remove crosses from the roofs of churches, rejection of facial-recognition cameras inside churches, and sermons that express ideas not in line with the Party can trigger harassment and persecution by the police.

In October 2025, a major crackdown against the underground Zion Church led to the arrest of 19 pastors. A news agency reported on this from within China, and you can watch it at <https://bit.ly/45SErJe>.

As a foreigner, I am not allowed to attend some Chinese churches, and I may not try to convert someone to Christianity, but I am free to talk one-on-one about my faith and live my love for Jesus openly. I want to urge people back home to take advantage of their religious freedoms. I live in a part of the world where people are not free to practice their faith. Imagine hiding to fellowship, or being in prison, only able to read Scripture that is smuggled in. We have the Bible on our phones, and it is with us every day, but we don’t make much of it. We should utilize our freedom and study the Word more, for many don’t have that freedom at all.

**Religious activities
are closely
monitored.**



Photo by Magnific

FAITH UNDER FIRE

BY GIDEON PARA-MALLAM

Following Jesus has become a dangerous affair in Africa which ironically, is today's epicentre of global Christianity. While churches are filled and services are vibrant, for millions of believers, persecution is not a distant theological debate, but a daily lived reality.

On Palm Sunday, 29 March 2026, hooded gunmen snaked their way into Angwan Rukuba, a Christian community in Jos, Nigeria. They opened fire and killed about 27 people. A year earlier on Palm Sunday, 51 persons were killed in Zike, another Christian community. Seventy-two per cent of Christians killed globally reside in Nigeria where Boko Haram, bandits, and armed Fulani herdsmen target Christian communities.

This situation is not unique to Nigeria. In Niger, gunmen attacked a baptism ceremony in September 2025, killing more than 20 believers. In Mozambique's Delgado region, Christians and missionaries are not spared in killings by the Islamic State in Mozambique (ISM). Across North Africa, registration laws and conversion restrictions push believers to worship in hiding.

Persecution in missions

Persecution is unjust hostility directed at those who profess faith in Jesus Christ, be they cross-cultural missionaries or local believers. According to Open Doors, 20 of the 50 countries where Christians face the highest persecution are in Africa, with five African nations ranking among the top 10. Most missionaries who have died at the hands of terrorists are indigenous Africans who obeyed the call to reach the unreached. Regardless of its intensity, persecution affects the mission of the Church.

Persecution runs along a spectrum. On one end is the violence resulting in the loss of life and property. On the other end is the quiet hostility through social ostracism, family rejection, exclusion from

employment, the demand for worship permits, etc. Persecution also shows up as the systemic strangulation of the rights of Christians where those who speak up are targeted for further harm.

Biblical perspective

Scripture never presents persecution as a surprise. In Matthew 5:10–12, Jesus calls the persecuted “blessed”, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Paul warned Timothy that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus would be persecuted (2 Tim 3:12). Persecution is not a sign that God's mission has failed or is failing; it is frequently the cost of carrying it out. Nevertheless, genocide under the veneer of persecution should be rejected, because wiping out families and communities is an affront to the God who created them.

Danger and promise

The visible toll of persecution is easy to track, but its hidden effects are just as heavy – trauma, strain on missionary families, worker attrition, forced closure of mission fields, etc. External dangers

aside, when mainstream prosperity gospel promises only wealth and ease in Christ, it leaves believers ill-equipped to withstand persecution and produces fewer mission-minded Christians.

Though struggling under the fist of persecution, the Church in Africa is also demonstrating remarkable faith. Congregations still gather on the ashes of burned buildings or worship in roofless churches and in camps for internally displaced people. Many remain committed to Christ and to the call to advance the gospel. As Jesus said, “I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).

The way forward

In obedience to Matthew 5:12, we should rejoice when we face persecution and also support the persecuted. We need a theology and a practice of care for trauma-affected missionaries and their families. It is imperative to raise mature, biblically grounded Christians who are ready to risk it all for God. As militants target church buildings, congregations should invest in resilient house-church models as a survival and a tactical strategy.

Persecution will not kill the Church but compromised Christian living can weaken its witness. Fulfilling God's missional mandate is still possible, but it depends on our faithfulness in the crucible of persecution. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/46P4TDC>.



The Rev'd Dr Gideon Para-Mallam has served with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) as the regional secretary for English- and Portuguese-speaking Africa and as national director for NIFES, Nigeria. He was the international deputy director of the Lausanne Movement and now serves as a global leadership development catalyst. He is president of The Gideon & Funmi Para-Mallam Peace Foundation, where he advocates for the persecuted Church and promotes peacebuilding to transform hostile relationships between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria and beyond.

TRIBULATION AND TESTIMONY

BY NEHEMIAH NENKINAN DESHI AND
BIRUKTAWIT TSEGAYE MANDEFRO



Isma and Agnes had a normal morning on 4 April 2011. After breakfast, Agnes went to gather wood in the nearby bush, while Isma left to see his family in a neighbouring town. At about 6 o'clock in the evening, people began trooping into their house. "Did your husband say he was coming back?" they asked. Soon, the dreaded news descended – Isma had been captured by a band of Hausa Fulani boys. He was taken into a mosque and asked to pray to Allah. When he refused, they took him to an abattoir, pierced his stomach, cut his tongue, and gouged out his eyes. After a slow and painful death, they buried Isma in a location still unknown to Agnes and her family. The seven boys who murdered Isma were eventually caught, but Agnes and her four sons were left devastated with no husband, no father, no corpse, and no burial site.

A missionary couple

Agnes met her husband, Isma Dogari, when he came on a mission trip to her

village in Billiri, Gombe State, Nigeria. After they got married, Agnes joined Isma on his missionary journeys. They served together in Katanga and Kampani in Bauchi State, and in a small town close to Pokitsum in Yobe State. Their last mission field was in Muntokshi in Tafawa Balewa, Bauchi State. They began in each community by going about evangelizing and inviting locals for Sunday services, sometimes meeting under trees. As they taught week after week, people got converted and the congregation grew. They would then start a church building, hand it over to the Evangelical Missionary Society (the sending body of the Evangelical Church Winning All, ECWA) where possible, and move to start over in another unreached community. They served many congregations alongside their four sons who were all born on the mission field.

Faith after persecution

Since Isma's death, life has been difficult for Agnes and her sons. Her children have been unable to complete their education as they had to drop out at different levels. Ageing and other health conditions make hard labour tasking on Agnes. Nevertheless, she remains optimistic and full of faith. Despite her grief, she has developed a new conviction – to finish well and stand firm to the end like her husband did. She is still involved in missions, preaching fearlessly, and ministering to other Christians. God is using her to comfort and encourage missionaries and widows to persevere and stay strong. When people commend her and wish they had her kind of faith, she points them to God as her source.

At age 53, Agnes prays that God keeps her loyal to the end. She prays for God's help to care for her children. She

**Agnes prays
that God
keeps her loyal
to the end.**

prays for the Church in northern Nigeria where persecution is rampant. She prays that God strengthens his children despite the storms, and she prays for guidance and wisdom for church leaders to speak out for the Church.

The pain and the struggle

For Mark Lipdo, hating Muslims and wishing the worst punishments on them came from a place of deep pain – the pain they had caused many Christians, including himself. On the day he dedicated his daughter, militants bombed his church, and one person was killed. But God instructed him to stop all his humanitarian work and learn how to love his persecutors like Stephen did in the Bible. Today, Mark runs the Stephanos Foundation, which he initiated 25 years ago. He advocates for the persecuted Church and gives practical care and support to vulnerable victims.

“For the past 25 years, I have documented the predicaments of persecuted Christians. I record daily occurrences and compile the figures at the end of each month. To date, 79,000 Christians have died and 3,000 have been kidnapped per my records. Millions have been displaced from their communities. Just this month of May, 129 incidents of violence were directed at Christians. Six hundred and twenty-two people died, 175 were kidnapped, and 80 sustained injuries. Just this morning, we woke up to news of an

attack on students who were writing their exams in Lasa, northeast Nigeria. Their attackers are against Western education. There were killings, but we do not yet know how many were abducted. How do you survive and maintain your faith as a Christian amid such alarming rates of violence?”

Resilience within

Despite the suffering he has witnessed, Mark has seen what persecution accomplishes for Christians. “It pushes us closer to God and makes us stronger and fearless. The Sunday after we were bombed, my church was full. People stood together for what they believed. Those who are displaced spread the gospel wherever they go and plant new churches. I have lost many people who worked with me, and I have buried many corpses. I have faced threats, and whenever I’m invited by the police, I tell my family that that may be my last day alive. But the Bible says we should not be afraid of those who can kill the body, but not the soul. If God is for us, who can be against us?”

“It is not about how bold I am in the face of persecution, but how strong I remain as a Christian. Sometimes, when trauma consumes people, they start to doubt God. I don’t want to stand ashamed before God. If you serve in a context of persecution, you had better be close to God because you don’t know who will be taken next. I’m scheduled for

a meeting with 45 widows. Every one of them has seen her husband killed. But God is working everything for good. This is what keeps me hopeful. Those who miss this understanding have left the faith and taken up arms in retaliation.”

Missions amid persecution

“What we are facing in Nigeria is a complex form of persecution. It includes the imposition of other religious ideologies on us, laws that undermine the free practice of our faith, and atrocities committed in the name of religion, such as displaying dismembered bodies in public to instil terror. These pose a significant risk for the 120 million Christians living in the country. Persecution also comes through verbal abuse, social ostracism, imprisonment, forced conversions, and attacks on churches.”

“When you go to serve as a missionary in any place, first do some research and count the cost. Risks do not stop Christians from going where they are called to go, but we need to prepare to face them. Embrace a theology of suffering without romanticizing martyrdom and reckless risk. Take security and crisis management training, learn cultural adaptation and language, and develop contingency plans. Sending organizations should provide realistic pre-field assessments, ongoing support structures, trauma-informed care, and policies for crisis response.”

God is at work

“Be encouraged when persecution comes because God is doing something. Paul experienced persecution in his missionary journeys but his ministry brought the gospel to other nations. The early Church was greatly persecuted by the Roman empire; yet they thrived. A close friend was serving in a Boko Haram operated area when he was abducted. He stayed with his abductors who asked him to pray for their wounded colleagues and even came to him for advice. He remained in that situation for eight years.”

“If you are called to reach a specific people group, don’t let fear keep you from going. Obey God, respect the laws of your host community, pray for persecutors, and endure with joy and hope. God uses suffering for his purposes, including advancing the Great Commission.”



Agnes Dogari

PREPARING FOR AND RESPONDING TO PERSECUTION

BY PAUL ACHILLES

Following Jesus in many parts of the world is not merely a private matter but a public risk. From abductions in eastern Africa, forced army conscriptions in the Horn, to violent deaths at the hands of fundamentalists, persecution affects cross-cultural workers and converts alike. These realities remind mission workers that persecution is not an unusual interruption to mission – it is often one of the contexts in which mission unfolds.

Persecution and mission workers

For mission workers, persecution includes pressure in private, community, national, and church life, and workers need to prepare for more than one type of threat. Persecution may be social, such as rejection, gossip, isolation, loss of honour, or pressure from family and community. It may be legal or administrative, such as a visa denial, interrogation, restrictions on gatherings, forced registration, fines, deportation, or closure of ministry activities. It may be economic – loss of employment, denial of services, eviction, theft, or targeted financial pressure. It may be digital, including surveillance, hacking, doxing, misinformation, or monitoring of contacts. It may be physical, in the form of threats, kidnapping, assault, imprisonment, or martyrdom. It may also be spiritual and emotional: discouragement, fear, anger, temptation to compromise, or compassion fatigue after caring for suffering believers. Persecution often leads to trauma, financial loss, disrupted ministry, risk to local believers, and moral confusion about whether to stay, flee, speak, remain silent, forgive, or seek justice.

What missionaries should know

Jesus warned his disciples that they would be sent like sheep among wolves. The early Church learned that suffering could scatter witnesses rather than silence them. Yet, persecution must never be romanticized. It is painful and often falls most heavily on local believers who cannot depart as easily as expatriate workers. Wise mission practice must hold together courage and caution, faith and planning, proclamation and pastoral care.

Situational awareness is key. Mission workers need to

understand the culture, local laws, religious sensitivities, community power structures, communication and its security implications, travel, church gatherings, social media, and partnership with local believers. The key question is not only, “Am I willing to suffer?” but also, “How can I love local believers wisely so that my actions do not create unnecessary danger for them?”

Preparing before persecution comes

Theology: Missionaries and senders should teach a biblical understanding of suffering, witness, perseverance, loving your enemy, lament, wisdom, and hope. Suffering does not imply abandonment by God, and seeking safety is not necessarily cowardice. Neither is retreating attrition. Scripture includes both bold witness (Acts 14:19–20) and strategic withdrawal (Acts 9:25). Matt Rhodes frames suffering within a practical theology meant to help missionaries endure hardship without losing gospel hope (*Persecution in Missions: A Practical Theology*).

Planning: Mission agencies and churches should conduct risk assessments, create crisis response plans, identify legal and medical support, establish secure communication protocols, agree on evacuation thresholds, and clarify who makes decisions in an emergency. Mission preparation should be informed by reliable information rather than assumptions.

Families need child-safety plans, schooling contingencies, counselling access, and honest conversations about fear, calling, and limits. Workers should build local friendships and have cultural informants, learn culture deeply, avoid unnecessary provocation, and develop rhythms of prayer, rest, accountability, and trauma care.

Beyond celebrating grace stories, senders should provide pastoral care, financial support, practical advocacy, informed prayer, and long-term support for workers who suffer. Leaders should prepare congregations to respond without panic, blame, gossip, or simplistic judgements.

Responding when persecution comes

Prayerful assessment: Our primary response must not be panic but prayer. Verify what has happened and who is at risk. Seek local believers’s guidance and the immediate protection needed. Do not communicate sensitive information widely. Use agreed secure channels, document incidents carefully, and contact assigned leaders, legal counsel, and crisis support. Assess both the immediate incident and the wider pattern of pressure around it.

Safety and security: Prioritize people over programmes. Protect vulnerable believers, children, local partners, and staff before trying to preserve ministry activities. Where appropriate, pause public work, change meeting patterns, relocate temporarily, or reduce visibility. Listen carefully to local Christian leaders; they often understand the risks better than outsiders.



Photo by AIM Stories

Love like Jesus: Respond as a disciple of Christ. Refuse revenge, dehumanizing speech, and reckless defiance. Pray for persecutors, tell the truth, seek justice where possible, and entrust ultimate vindication to God. Some situations call for public advocacy; others require quiet endurance. Some call for staying; others call for leaving. These decisions should be made through prayer, counsel, local wisdom, security realities, and concern for the body of Christ.

Provide aftercare: Persecution can leave deep wounds even after the immediate danger passes. Workers may need medical care, trauma counselling, debriefing, rest, help with re-entry, financial support, and space to grieve. Ministering to those who suffer for Christ requires pastoral care that addresses the whole person rather than treating persecution only as a strategic ministry problem. The goal is not simply to get the missionary back to work but to help the whole person to heal and continue faithfully.

Recommended resources

Workers should be prepared through a comprehensive training curriculum for their theological and missiological grounding, prayer and spirituality, cultural and ethnographic understanding. Helpful resources include Open Doors's World Watch List and prayer materials, The Voice of the Martyrs's Global Prayer Guide, World Mission Centre's Live School Curriculum and Matt Rhodes's *Persecution in Missions: A Practical Theology*.

Final encouragement

Preparing for persecution is not preparing to be afraid; it is preparing to be faithful. Mission workers do not seek suffering, and they should not expose others to needless danger. But neither should they be surprised when costly witness is required. The worker is a surrendered life in the hands of Jesus, who is worthy of both our life and death. The Church's task is to send wisely, support deeply, respond practically, and keep pointing suffering servants to Christ, who suffered, rose, reigns, and will one day wipe away every tear. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/4zZMlbZ>.

Paul Achilles is a missionary pastor who is currently the regional director for the World Mission Centre in eastern Africa.

PROTECT THOSE SERVING IN HARD PLACES

BY AFRIGO TEAM



Photo by AIM Stories

Across the globe, some of the most vital missionary work also needs some of the greatest discernment about what can be communicated publicly or online. Governments and people groups can be hostile to the gospel, and those sharing the love of Christ must be very careful about how they speak and behave. How, then, can you communicate with missionaries and share about their work without compromising their ministry and the lives of local believers?

Digital danger

Your social media posts, blogs, and websites can be incorporated in algorithms by AI and appear in an online search. Simply mentioning the full name of your missionary on the church website could create challenges for their ability to serve in that country long-term. It is best to ask your missionary how to talk about them and what channels you should use to communicate with them. Best principles include the following:

Alternative words: Use the word “worker” instead of “missionary” and not words like “missions”, “evangelism”, “ministry”, “conversion”, or the mission organization’s name. These words are not bad, but they carry

a negative intent within the context where the missionaries serve. Avoid making connections to other workers in the country so that people would not connect the dots to your missionary.

Location: When you do talk about where they serve, use broad terms such as “North Africa” instead of naming specific countries. Don’t mention the name of the people group; rather say, “Our workers are serving among the unreached.” It is best to use pseudonyms online. You may share the real names of your missionaries in face-to-face interactions with trusted church members.

Although it can feel like you should not communicate at all, your brothers and sisters working in hard places need your encouragement and support. Use the platforms and formats they suggest and write to them about things happening in your life, being mindful of the guidelines above. Ask them how they are doing. Tell them you are thinking of them. You can share a Bible verse which has blessed you.

There are many stories of workers whose ministries have been ruined or endangered due to incautious actions by well-meaning church members. Let’s support our emissaries and also act responsibly, carefully, and prayerfully.

GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILIZING CHURCH

BOOK REVIEW **PERSPECTIVES (5TH EDITION): A WIDER TABLE, A GLOBAL VISION** BY SUZY ABRAHAM

Perspectives on the World Christian Movement® is a 15-lesson global discipleship course created in 1974 to give churches a biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic view of God's Great Commission call. *Perspectives* is used today in 40 countries in nine languages and has trained 200,000 Christians for global evangelization.

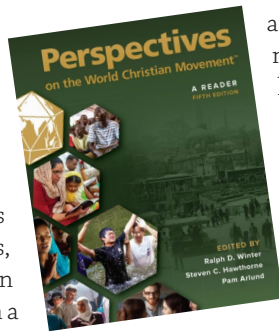
The fifth edition preserves the course's central conviction that God is fulfilling his purpose among all peoples, while presenting that vision with greater clarity and through a wider range of voices. Its biblical foundations remain strong, including God's promise to Abraham, the glory of God, the Kingdom of Christ, the Great Commission, and the unfinished task. At the same time, many lessons have been refined through more accessible

writing, clearer objectives, and a stronger emphasis on worship, justice, creation care, and participation in what God is already doing.

As a South African, I find the wider representation of cultures and experiences especially meaningful. Our country has travelled through the painful history of apartheid into a democratic society that continues learning how to live with freedom, reconciliation, and diversity. That journey has taught us that people must not simply be spoken about; they must be given space to speak, interpret their own experiences, and contribute their gifts. Africa, Asia, and Latin America are no longer presented as places that received

missionaries, but as regions with their own movements and senders.

Women, indigenous partners, Black missionaries, and other previously overlooked contributors are also given greater visibility. The edition engages contemporary realities such as migration, global cities, digital ministry, cultural identity, frontier people groups, and sustainable community transformation through local churches. It moves away from models in which outsiders are always the central actors and instead, recognizes local believers as leaders and agents of lasting change. No single edition can fully represent the richness of the worldwide Church, and every country will still need to bring its own stories and questions into the classroom. Nevertheless, the fifth edition represents a faithful and timely renewal. Read more here: <https://bit.ly/3SN8IGs>.



B2B CONNEXION 2026 LAUNCHES IN GHANA



The maiden edition of The Blessing Convocation/B2B Connexion came off from 1–2 May 2026 at the Legon Interdenominational Church (LIC) in Legon, Accra. It brought together over 100 delegates from Ghana, Nigeria, Mali and beyond for formation, equipping, and deployment. The convocation aimed to address the “missing missional middle” of the disconnect between the vibrant life of Africa's gathered church and its

involvement in transformative mission in the world.

It was a collaborative endeavour by the entire body of Christ in Ghana through the Ghana Evangelical Missions Association (GEMA) – particularly its Missional Young Leaders department known as GEMA NextGen – and the Ghana Evangelism Committee (GEC).

The conference featured nine impactful speakers who addressed key themes in mission and discipleship, such

as “Transmission! Mending the Missing Missional Middle”, “Discipleship: The Primary Goal of Mission”, “Full Hearts, Open Hands”, “Soundtrack of the Sent”, “Praying Bigger”, among others. It was intentional that no plenary speaker was above 50 years of age, strategically positioning these “bridge leaders” between the sun-rising emerging leaders under 35 years and the sun-setting established ones over 50 years.

Beyond the plenary sessions and workshops, the conference hosted eight exhibition booths which created opportunities for networking and resource sharing among delegates and organizations. Everyone left the convocation blessed, knowing that our top-line blessing only means we are to be a blessing in turn – that the bottom-line blessing is where true legacy lingers. You can watch the full recordings on YouTube at <https://bit.ly/4g3IVCN> and <https://bit.ly/4hvZGm>.

SERVING AMID DANGER

BY JACOB MUGENDI

The joy of getting his first convert in the mission field was short-lived. One Sunday after leaving church, the police stopped the local convert. They searched the car, found a Bible, and arrested the person. They went to the church to arrest anyone else who was there. Luckily, John* had already left, but two other Christian workers were taken.

John escaped, but he was a marked person. He could choose to return to his home country, but the thought of the millions who had never heard the gospel and were also prevented from hearing by their government made him stay. The threat of attacks and arrests could not overpower his love for the lost.

Born in West Africa to a Catholic mother and a traditionalist father, life was hard. John's mother was the fourth wife, and the family was dysfunctional. Eventually, his mother left, leaving John to grow up in a large polygamous household without her. In his desire to reconnect with her, John travelled to a neighbouring country, where he not only found his mother, but also found Christ. John became rooted in the faith and served in the church until the Lord called him to the mission field.

John's call to missions was not dramatic, but God's hand was in it. His church wanted to send someone who was mature in the faith and had leadership experience. Many people qualified, but John had something else: he could speak French, a language he reluctantly took in school at his father's insistence. God had used his unbelieving father to prepare him for the field!

John served successfully for 15 years, until his sending church decided to pull out from the field. This meant that a critical part of their support ended. He had to either leave the field or find other



means of funding. Unwilling to leave, John stayed and served with the little support he could find. Other gospel workers pitched in until John found a sending agency that was willing to provide care and connect him with a new sending church.

Risks and dangers

"Serving in North Africa is risky, but that shouldn't deter anyone," John says. "As a God-sent missionary, you should be more conscious of the God who sent you than of the risk involved."

If a missionary is discovered by the government to be spreading Christianity, the worst that could happen is deportation. The bigger risk is from Islamists who easily kill. John knows one missionary who lost his life at the hands of Islamists.

Local converts to Christianity brave the greatest danger. They could face death from family members, friends, and ordinary people in the community. They can be ostracized and lose their sense of

belonging. It is an isolation that few can endure. John says that they help new converts walk the Christian faith without placing them in undue peril, such as asking new believers not to declare their faith in Jesus too early.

Serving by prayer

With regular threats of persecution, prayer has been a pillar for John and for new converts. He wins converts through prayer and teaches them to pray to stand firm. This is critical if you want genuine converts, and not those who convert for material or some other gain.

Other challenges requiring prayer are the numerous unreached, the government not wanting them to be reached, and the higher cost of doing missions in North Africa compared to other African countries. John's ministry has been rooted in prayer and to date, he regularly runs prayer meetings with and for local believers.

Changing landscape

When he first landed in North Africa, reaching the people was harder than it is now. The government was stricter and more wary of Christians, and the people were more closed to the gospel. With time, things eased. Through the internet, people are now more exposed, and the government finds it harder to restrict them from knowing what is happening outside their borders.

John encourages the African Church to double down on reaching the unreached in North Africa, since it is easier for people from other parts of Africa to reach them than people coming from other continents. Opportunities to reach out exist in agriculture, sports, business, and teaching – especially English language. These are avenues for work in restricted places while reaching the unreached.



PEOPLE GROUP

Photo by Jordi Zaragoza Anglès

THE HARATINE OR BLACK MOORS OF MAURITANIA

The word Moor traces its origin to the historical term Mauri, which originally described any speaker of Hassaniya – the regional Arabic dialect of Mauritania. Today, Mauritanian society remains deeply structured along racial and ancestral lines. It is broadly divided between the Beidane (White Moors of Arab-Berber descent) and the Haratine (Black Moors).

Numbering approximately 2.64 million, the Black Moors constitute nearly 40 per cent of the nation's population. As descendants of sub-Saharan Africans, the Haratine were absorbed into Moorish culture through centuries of servitude. Despite formal legal abolitions of slavery, many Haratine continue to navigate the lowest strata of society, facing systemic marginalization, economic hardship, and social discrimination.

Almost entirely Sunni Muslim, their moral framework, social customs, and daily rhythms are steeped in Islamic

traditions. With evangelical presence estimated between 0.0 and 0.1 per cent, the Haratine remain one of the most least-reached people groups in West Africa.

Ranked 21st on Open Doors's World Watch List for Christian persecution, Mauritania enforces strict laws prohibiting citizens from converting away from Islam. Public expressions of the Christian faith by non-citizens are regulated, with penalties including imprisonment and deportation. Believers and local converts face immense pressure, ranging from clan and family rejection to ethno-religious hostility and broader societal oppression. Radical leaders frequently incite hostility against believers, making public faith dangerous; yet, God has not left himself without a witness. Christian organizations – including World Vision, Caritas, and Lutheran groups – are serving and demonstrating Christ's love through health education, environmental stewardship, and poverty relief.

AT A GLANCE

- The Haratine are a warm, vibrant, and incredibly resilient people. Culturally, Islam is the bedrock of their identity.
- Daily life for them revolves around communal strength, family ties, manual labour, herding, and agriculture.
- The New Testament has been fully translated into Hassaniya. Audio-visual tools such as the Jesus Film are available to share the gospel in their heart language.

PRAY FOR

- An end to systemic discrimination and for new economic and educational opportunities to break generations of poverty among the Haratine.
- God to grant wisdom, favour, and safety to Christian development groups serving as living witnesses.
- Protection, deep spiritual strength, and bold perseverance for the few Mauritanian believers, and for hostility toward Christians to be replaced with open-hearted inquiry.

Sources: Operation World, Joshua Project, Wikipedia



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