

PERSECUTION · UNDERGROUND CHURCH · IRAN

Fire in Secret

The church that cannot meet in the open

VERSE

"And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

John 1:5 · CSB

STORY

For years, outsiders assumed the church in Iran was dying under pressure. The opposite is closer to the truth. After the 1979 revolution, most foreign missionaries left. Church buildings were watched, pastors were questioned, and public conversion from Islam became dangerous. What remained was forced into homes — small gatherings, whispered songs, Bibles passed hand to hand.

Open Doors and other monitors of the persecuted church have repeatedly ranked Iran among the hardest countries on earth to follow Jesus openly. Yet the same reports describe a church that multiplies in private: house fellowships, disciples who make disciples, and people coming to faith through dreams, satellite media, and quiet conversations. Elam Ministries and others who train Iranian believers describe a generation that never saw a foreign missionary — and still found Christ.

One pattern shows up again and again: someone meets Jesus in secret, tells a family member, then a neighbor, then a co-worker. There is no stage and no program — only risk, and a gospel that keeps spreading where it is not supposed to. The darkness is real. So is the light.

MISSIONARY QUOTE

"I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light."

— John Keith Falconer

STUNNING FACTS

- Iran sits deep in the 10/40 window — one of the least-evangelized regions on earth.
- Open Doors' World Watch List has long placed Iran near the top of countries where Christians face extreme pressure (often top 10 worldwide).
- Public conversion from Islam can bring family rejection, job loss, arrest, and — in the hardest cases — prison or worse.
- Most new believers come from a Muslim background; historic Christian minorities are small and watched.
- Satellite TV, online Scripture, and diaspora networks carry the gospel where street evangelism is not free.

PRAISE REPORT

Despite intense pressure, research and advocacy groups report that the Iranian church — especially among Muslim-background believers — has grown dramatically over recent decades. What the revolution tried to seal off, God has been opening through ordinary people, media, and prayer.

WHERE

Middle East · borders Iraq,
Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey...



Islamic Republic of Iran · 10/40 window

UNREACHED SNAPSHOT

Persian (Iranian)

Population	tens of millions
Language	Persian (Farsi)
Religion	Islam (mostly Shia)
Christian %	very small
Access	restricted; house church

Pray for open doors + bold, wise witness.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What does "light in the darkness" look like in your own life this week — and where do you still prefer the dark?
2. If following Jesus cost you family, work, or safety the way it can cost Iranians, what would change in how you live tomorrow?
3. Why do you think the gospel often multiplies in secret when public religion is tightly controlled?
4. Who in your circle has never heard a clear gospel — and what keeps you from telling them?

PRAYER POINTS

- Iranian house-church believers — courage, unity, protection from informers and raids.
- Prisoners for their faith — perseverance, gospel opportunities with guards, release in God's timing.
- Muslim-background seekers curious about Jesus but terrified of their families finding out.
- Leaders and trainers (inside Iran and in the diaspora) who equip house-church planters.
- Scripture and media that keep reaching hearts the police cannot stop.
- Us — that we would not waste religious freedom, and that we would carry Iran in daily prayer.

DISCUSS

Pick one thought question above and answer it out loud.
Then pray together for Iran by name.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Pray for Iran every day this week — even 60 seconds.
2. Share one fact with another Christian.
3. Give to a ministry that serves the persecuted church.

Sources: Open Doors · Joshua Project · Elam · ICC / VOM · Stratus