



 **OpenDoors**

ADVOCACY IMPACT 2025



Former Dutch base director Maarten Dees presents the World Watch List to the former Minister of Foreign Affairs

GOVERNMENT & PARLIAMENTARY INFLUENCE

We had significant engagement with national parliaments and ministries of foreign affairs, resulting in policy shifts, debates, and commitments.

In Sweden, the Prime Minister acknowledged the gravity of Christian persecution for the first time and said the government needs to do more to help those experiencing violations. The Swedish Foreign Minister's office was grateful for our insights on Burundi and said to our Advocate, Maria: "the network and partners you have would be impossible for us to find or meet in the country because of our limited access." Swedish MPs sent letters to the Iranian Embassy in Stockholm regarding Christians imprisoned in Iran, including a left-wing MP for the first time. Open Doors data was used in 15 parliamentary motions – a record for OD Sweden!

Global Advocacy Director Tiffany Barrans liaised with the **U.S.** State Department and with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), connecting World Watch Research with the annual religious freedom report that they publish.

The **Danish** Government launched its 5-year development strategy, which contained the line: "Danish development work will continue to provide unambiguous support for freedom of religion or belief, not least with a focus on efforts for persecuted Christians." Director Jens Kristian helped shape this strategy, which was approved by 8 political parties.

In the **Netherlands**, our Advocate Wimco presented the World Watch List (WWL) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and 4 MPs from different parties submitted questions to the Minister about the importance of the WWL for their work. The Dutch House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Aid

held a roundtable on the DRC, in which Illia Djadi (Senior Analyst for Sub-Saharan Africa) participated. In October, Dutch political parties and NGOs working with persecuted Christians, including Open Doors, organized a public walk against persecution, attracting several hundred people.

The **French** government responded to four written questions from MPs, prompted by

us – on religious minorities in the Sahel, protecting Christians from Islamist violence, the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel and the situation of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa.

Two **German** base team members travelled to Berlin in October to meet the Federal Commissioner for FoRB and several MPs, one of whom suggested regular meetings in the future.

INFLUENCE ON INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (UN, EU)



Presentation of the World Watch List at the European Parliament in Brussels

ODI's advocacy at multilateral bodies led to visibility for persecuted Christians in formal processes and reports.

Anastasia Hartman, EU Advocacy Officer, was appointed to the **OSCE ODIHR** (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) [Panel of Experts](#) on Freedom of Religion or Belief for a three-year term. Panel members serve in their personal capacities as experts on the topic of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief. The panel's expertise is available to OSCE States and NGOs. The ODIHR published [Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes](#), in which OD UK's [Persecution of Christian Women and](#)

[Girls Report](#) was referenced twice. Tiffany Barrans, Global Advocacy Director, was selected as a member of the Council of Experts for the [Article 18 Alliance](#) (formerly IRFBA) - a group of 38 nations committed to protecting and promoting the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. Tiffany will advise senior government representatives from each nation as they work together to combat persecution and discrimination. Henrietta Blyth, CEO of OD UK&I, also sits on the Council of Experts.

Our Norwegian base met with the Chair of IPPFoRB, an international network of parliamentarians with its Secretariat in Oslo and facilitated contact with between IPPFoRB and ODI.

United Nations

January saw the Geneva launch of the [annual report](#) we release with Article 18, CSW and Middle East Concern, timed to coincide with Iran's **Universal Periodic Review** (UN human rights review taking place every 4 years). The event featured testimonies from two Iranian Christians, one of whom – a convert named Amin Afshar-Naderi - was arrested twice for his faith and spent a year in Evin Prison. The Iranian Embassy hosted its own event showcasing human rights that same afternoon. The Iranian MP responsible for religious minorities talked about the equal rights that Christians have in Iran. Mr Afshar-Naderi challenged this, asking where converts from Islam were allowed to worship. Read more about the contrasting narratives [here](#).

At the **Human Rights Council** March session, ODI co-sponsored an event on church registration requirements and their negative impact on the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief. There were 55 attendees including staff from 13 permanent representations. Our East Africa Research Manager, Fikiru Mehari, gave a powerful presentation on the situation in Burundi, which we made reference to in an oral statement in the June Human Rights Council session.

We contributed to UPRs on Iran, Libya and Mozambique (which was picked up in the [media](#)). The UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB quoted us twice in her [report on FoRB and IDPs](#).

European Union

The **European Commission** committed to consider religious literacy in humanitarian aid distribution - one of our main Arise Africa policy recommendations. Ahead of the EU – African Union Summit, MEPs from the FoRB Intergroup [wrote](#) to



Torchlight March, Norway.

the Commission President asking the European institutions to use the Summit to discuss combatting religious persecution and involve African church leaders in implementing EU programmes.

The **EU Asylum Agency's** Iraq [country report](#) cited Open Doors research extensively (more than 10 references). Open Doors contributed to four European Parliament resolutions – on converts in [Iran](#), on targeted attacks against Christians in the

[DRC](#), on the [mass kidnapping of children in Nigeria](#) and on the [EU-Africa partnership](#), which expressed concern over Christian persecution and recognition of churches as vital providers of essential social services. These two points align with our Arise Africa recommendations. In November, the European Parliament held a [debate](#) on the situation of Christians and other religious minorities in Nigeria and the Middle East, and Europe's responsibility to protect them and guarantee freedom of conscience.

GROWING OUR INFLUENCE



In France in April, more than 250 people, including mayors, ministers and politicians, heard our CEO talking about Syria at an event organized by the Ile-de-France region and the CHREDO association. The French team gave out 30 WWL reports and had some fruitful discussions with officials, journalists and pastors, many of whom were hearing about Open Doors for the first time.

Swedish embassies in Libya, Tunisia, Turkey and Colombia responded positively to having been sent WWL materials.

In **Switzerland**, Director Philippe Fonjallaz, along with parliamentarians who form the Working Group on FoRB, sent a letter to the Mauritanian Embassy in Switzerland regarding the situation of Christians in Selibaby. The reply said they

were monitoring and investigating the incidents, recognized the right to security of all Mauritians and thanked the parliamentarians for their respectful tone.

National media coverage: In **Finland**, Miika Auvinen presented the WWL on Good Morning Finland (national TV). France, Netherlands, Spain, UK and Denmark also had national media coverage. Our Global

Advocacy Director Tiffany Barrans gave interviews about Nigeria and Ethiopia to BBC World Service, USA Today, Fox News and Catholic Radio in Slovakia.

Just as important are relations with **churches**: leaders from the Armenian church in **Sweden** attended the WWL Launch, as did the Representative of Chinese churches in **Spain**. Our Swedish colleagues met with one of the leaders of the largest denomination at an [ecumenical meeting](#) that hadn't happened for 100 years. The leader shortly afterwards wrote an article on persecuted Christians.

In terms of **supporter** relations, the **UK** organized a [National Week of Prayer](#), during which supporters offered up 10,000 prayers for the UK government's [FoRB strategy](#), which covers 10 countries. In the spring, **French** supporters sent over 60 letters asking for the release of Mina, a prisoner of conscience in Iran. In October, she was released. **Norway's** annual

torchlight marches, held in 25 locations in the autumn, focused on the situation of Christians in North Korea.

Youth-to-Youth Forum, MENA

30 young people from multiple countries came together for 3 days for this Forum, designed to foster dialogue, support, and action among Christian youth who often experience isolation, discrimination, and marginalization due to their religious identity. The 2025 theme was Rights of Converts. Participants learnt some advocacy tools and worked on a social media campaign.

"We can and we need to stand up and take action to help and support each other,"
a participant from Egypt commented.

"Advocacy and justice are not political ideas; they're part of the Gospel, a call to be a voice for the voiceless,"
said another participant.

WORLD WATCH LIST (WWL) 2025 – GLOBAL ADVOCACY MOMENTUM



Presentation of the WWL in Denmark

The **EU Parliament launch** saw a full room with MEPs from different parties, Commission and European External Action Service officials.

France had 11 MPs attend their launch at the Senate, with Charlie from ILPA speaking. 19 MPs attended the National Assembly launch, with Marie from



Cameroon speaking. As a result, several MPs asked a question to the government regarding foreign aid for IDPs in Africa, one of which got a positive response. Other MPs have signed or promoted the Arise Africa petition.

Denmark's launch attendees included the Chairs of the Foreign Affairs committee and Foreign Policy board and the Foreign Affairs rapporteurs from three parties. They also held a launch event at the Faroese parliament.

Netherlands joined with the Humanists to present to the parliament's Foreign Affairs committee. The Special Envoy for FoRB and the High Official responsible for human rights attended and were interviewed by national media.

In **Sweden**, 12 MPs from left and right attended. Three MPs from three different political parties (all members of the Parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee) commented on the WWL report at **Norway's** launch event.

In **Spain**, three parliamentarians from Spanish Congress made their way across town to the church where the launch event was being held.

106 MPs attended the **UK** Launch including the new FoRB Special envoy. The team also presented the WWL to the All Party Parliamentary Group on FoRB and to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), which catalysed relations with new MPs.

ARISE AFRICA ADVOCACY

A major cross regional advocacy push elevated the crisis in sub Saharan Africa.

During 2025:

- **More than 50 media interviews were conducted with our spokespeople,** across both secular and Christian media, in at least 10 countries.
- **Around 400 pieces of coverage relating to campaign issues were achieved,** with Open Doors being referenced as a source in several cases. More than 200 of these were in the UK. To give just a few examples: Tiffany and Jane from ODI Advocacy were interviewed on Nigeria by Premier Christian Radio and TWR. The interviews were quoted in Fox News. Spain secured a correction from the national broadcaster RTVE after Open Doors challenged inaccurate reporting regarding the religious dimension of the conflict in Nigeria.
- **We had nearly 100 engagements with UN agencies, the EU or national governments relating to our campaign priorities.** These included four submissions to the UN, a public hearing in the Danish Parliament on the persecution of religious groups in Africa where we presented four recommendations, and the Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade & Development visiting our Netherlands office to discuss our work in Africa, amongst other countries. The Dutch team also briefed their human rights ambassador ahead of his trip to Nigeria.

- **20 public statements were made by the UN, the EU or national governments acknowledging the impact of faith-based violence in Africa.** These included a [statement by the Italian government](#) condemning violence against Christians in Nigeria (following OD engagement). The UK Minister of State for International Development & Africa made statements in debates in which he called for perpetrators to be brought to justice in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria.

- **Five commitments were made by national governments that align with our policy recommendations.**



Illia Djadi, Senior Analyst for Sub-Saharan Africa, addresses the IPPFoRB Academy in Ghana

With our guidance, **Article 18 Alliance** engaged with the Nigerian President on blasphemy laws and continued violence, expressing concern and inviting him to dialogue.

Global Advocacy Director Tiffany had other strategic opportunities to inform and influence on Nigeria including on weekly cross-government calls with civil society, to the **U.S.** House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Africa and even to NFL (American football) players! This last engagement resulted in an OD U.S./ ODI-influenced [public letter](#) signed by the players.

Illia Djadi addressed the **IPPFORB Academy in Ghana** about escalating violence against Christians in SSA. OD's recommendations were captured in the Accra Declaration signed by participants. Attendees were MPs from Africa. Illia also trained African journalists.

There was a debate in the **UK** parliament on Christian persecution. 24 MPs attended and 19 spoke. 9 mentioned violence in Nigeria and 2 mentioned girls and women being disproportionately affected by this. The UK saw 9 written questions from MPs (4 different parties) regarding FoRB in Nigeria, DRC and Cameroon. The Government responded to each acknowledging the situation in these countries and detailing the support the UK is offering to try to protect FoRB. The response to two of these questions included mention of OD. At the UK Conservative Party Conference, Arise Africa was presented and a petition card was placed on every seat.



Ted Blake, Director of Open Doors Spain, presenting the WWL

In December, the OD UK&I and ODI Advocacy teams hosted a global webinar on the question “Are Christians being persecuted in Nigeria?” We had three Nigerian expert speakers – Steven Kefas, a Nigerian journalist and senior analyst for the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa; The Honorable Terwase Orbunde, former Chief of Staff to the Governor of Benue State and member of State Security Council; and Jabez Musa, human rights attorney and member of the Nigerian Bar Association. We had 170 attendees from 23 countries.

