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# Bread & *Ink*

Words to nourish the global church

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## PEOPLE OF PEACE IN PLACES OF WAR

mai

# Learn Together. Grow Together.

**Media Associates International (MAI)** is a global network of Christian writers, editors, and publishers from places with little locally authored content.

Our online communities bring people together from around the world to reflect, create and pray.

Together, we hope to see locally written publications strengthen the Church and impact society.

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## ABOUT MAI

In many countries, few of the Christian books available are penned by local authors.

Those creating this content often work alone, with little local support, and have few opportunities for community and training.

In the world's hardest places, where readers are searching for a certain hope that speaks to their lives, these writings are just not there.

We envision a world in which readers everywhere have access to life-transforming Christian content written in their heart language.

So we equip and encourage Christian writers, editors and publishers to create excellent content that strengthens the global Church and influences society.

# True Peace Begins with Christ



Trix Wilkins
*Editor*

Welcome to our first edition of *Bread & Ink*: *Words to nourish the global church*! We're excited to be able to provide this platform for Christian writers in the hard places of the world so that their thoughts, ideas and creativity may be more widely known. Our contributors live in places where there are few Christians, or there is relatively little Christian publishing activity. Most stories appear in two languages—in English and the heart language of the author.

As someone who has lived all her life in a country at peace, God has shown me much about being People of Peace in Places of War through the content in this edition. The deeper message throughout this edition is that true peace with God, through Christ's sacrifice, matters even more than living in a place of peace.

As managing director of a Christian publishing house in Pakistan, Peter Calvin writes of the great resilience of Christians who are thoughtfully and strategically engaging with their communities as they seek a place of peace for all people in their country—not just for Christians.

In a powerful personal testimony, Gökhan Talas of Turkey admits that while it is hard to be a person of peace when you lose loved ones to violence, it is possible in Christ. He challenges us to pursue peace. "It is not a dream—it is a discipline. It's not a wish—it's a witness."

For award-winning author Lawrence Darmani, Christian publishing is spiritually impactful and therefore something that will be attacked by our enemy. His story spurs us as Christian writers and artists to keep going, to know that the work that we do has tangible, eternal consequences for the salvation of many.

Each of these authors—as well as others in this edition—is engaged in a spiritual battle. As Christians, we all are. I suspect it was unusually difficult for each author to write their story of our Prince of Peace, as it was strangely a battle for me to write even this. Our struggle is not mere 'writer's block,' but against spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12).

As you read, I invite you to pray for each of these authors. Pray for the country and the people they are writing about, the publishing houses and teams they serve with. Pray that their ministries may flourish, and be sources of hope and strength for their communities. Christian books and writings are not only for us, but for future generations to know salvation in Christ. ◆



# The Mission Starts Within

Siham Daoud



We live in a world surrounded by conflict: nations at war, communities divided, families broken, and hearts unsettled. In such a world, followers of Jesus are called to respond differently. We are called to be people of peace, not only in peaceful places, but especially in places of war.

Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44).

His words challenge us most when hatred, fear, and violence seem to rule. As Christians, we are not to reflect the anger around us, but to reflect the heart of Christ even toward those who wound us, showing mercy and courage, and trusting that God's justice and mercy are greater than human revenge.

"Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said, "for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Peacemakers are not passive observers; they are active witnesses. They enter places of war, whether battlefields, divided homes, or wounded hearts, with healing, hope, and reconciliation. They bring calm into chaos and unity into division.

This mission begins within. Through Jesus, we have peace with God, and that peace empowers us to extend his peace to others. Paul urged, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18).

While we can't control others, we can control our response—choosing to forgive, to listen with love, and to answer conflict with grace.

Jesus modeled this peace under pressure. During his arrest, he refused violence, telling Peter to put away his sword (Matthew 26:52). On the cross, He extended forgiveness, establishing peace between God and humanity. His life shows that true peace is not the absence of struggle but the triumph of love and forgiveness amid it.

Being a "person of peace" doesn't mean pretending that war or pain don't exist. It means standing firm in Christ's love even in times of chaos, choosing to be light where darkness reigns, to pray where hatred grows, and to trust God when fear spreads.

Philippians 4:7 reminds us, "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

In a world torn apart by war, may we, God's people, become living testimonies of his peace. At times, in the midst of violence, uncertainty, and pain, we may feel weary or tempted to give up. But God calls us to remain steadfast, to keep sowing peace where others sow despair, and to stand firm in faith even when hope seems fragile.

As followers of Christ, we are not merely called to survive the storms of our times but to shine through them—to be encouragers, reconcilers, and carriers of God's presence wherever conflict rages. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead empowers us to bring comfort where there is fear, prayer where there is hatred, and love where there is loss.

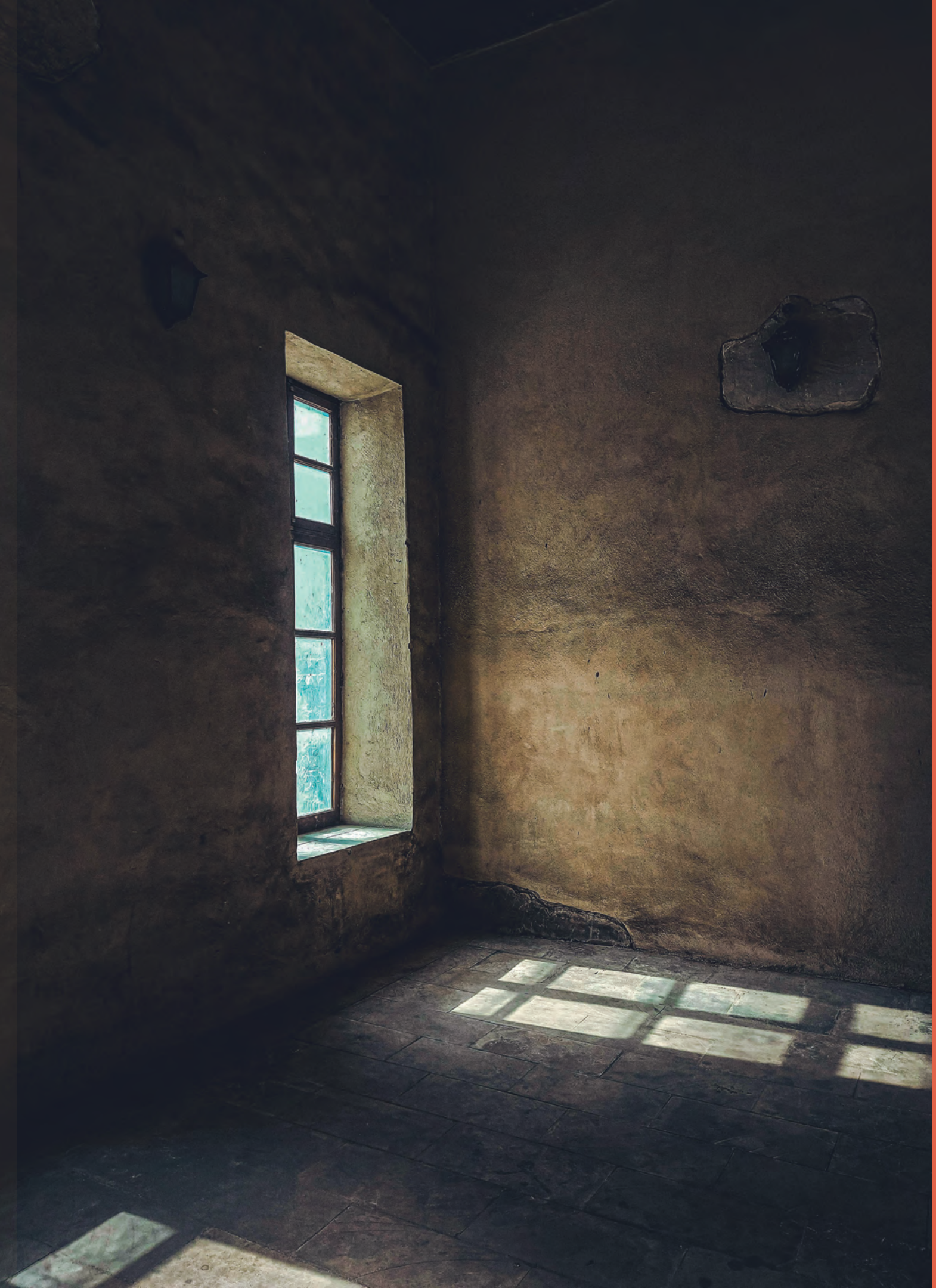
So let us not lose heart. For true peace does not depend on the absence of war, but on the presence of Christ within us. Not because the world is calm, but because the Prince of Peace reigns in our hearts and through us, he continues to bring light into the darkest places. ◆



**Siham Daoud** serves as director for Every Generation Ministry in Lebanon, where she is dedicated to nurturing spiritual growth and leadership development across all age groups. She is also the project manager for Voices of Arab Women with Christian publishing house Dar Manhal Al Hayat (darmanhal.org), and contributes to amplifying women's voices and stories throughout the Arab world. Siham is married and a proud mother of 26-year-old twins.



Israa Khaled / Pexels



# Agents of Peace

Peter Calvin

In fiction, conflict is often an essential part of storytelling. Stories without it tend to bore us. But the conflicts we face in the real world are not stories—they are violent, destructive, and leave deep and lasting scars.

Pakistan—a country known for its majestic mountain ranges, breathtaking valleys, ancient civilizations like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, rich cultural heritage, and warm, hospitable people—has unfortunately become associated with a different kind of narrative.

For over two decades, Pakistan has endured a prolonged wave of terrorism, according to the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA). Violence, extremism and intolerance have permeated many layers of society. Over 80,000 lives have been lost.

Among the many Pakistani communities affected, Christians have suffered significantly. This includes the vandalism, burning and bombing of homes and churches—often in connection with blasphemy accusations followed by mob violence.

## RESPONDING WITH PEACE

The Christian understanding of peace is not simply the absence of conflict, but the active presence of God's wholeness and healing. For Pakistani Christians, peace is not achievable through human effort alone—it is the gift of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ.

This leads us to forgive and strive for reconciliation. Despite the devastation, we've largely responded not with retaliation, but with peace and resilience. Rooted in our faith in the God of peace, we pray and forgive, trusting in his justice and timing.

The church in Pakistan thus consistently promotes peace, justice, tolerance and coexistence, supporting governmental and societal efforts to counter extremism and violence. Many young Christians have chosen to serve by joining law enforcement and the military.

In Pakistan, we are in a situation where we have a wonderful message of peace for those who persecute us. As Christian authors and publishers, we need to reach out with a message of reconciliation which only comes from Jesus Christ.

## STRATEGIES OF RESILIENCE

Pakistan's Christians have developed a multi-faceted strategy of resilience and engagement:

- **Seeking Safety**: In some cases, Christians receive early warnings of planned attacks and flee their homes to save their lives. Life is a gift from God, and it is right to protect it.
- **Pastoral and Community Support**: The Pakistani Church responds quickly during crises, providing food, household goods, emotional support, and spiritual care. Even those with little to give contribute sacrificially.
- **A Wider View of Security**: We respond to suffering by enlarging our concern for justice to include others—the only world in which we are to be more secure is one in which everyone is more secure.
- **Publishing for Peace**: Books are being written and published to encourage Christians and Muslims to live in peace, and to see our shared humanity as bearers of the image of God.
- **Gratitude for Kindness**: In many incidents, Muslim neighbors sheltered fleeing Christians—we're thankful for such examples of solidarity, compassion and friendship that transcend religious differences.
- **Rebuilding and Restoration**: Local and international Christian organizations assist in rebuilding homes and churches, often stepping in where government support is slow or lacking.
- **Recognizing Hard Elements of Reconciliation**: We recognize that the Lord in His sovereignty and for His purposes has placed us here to face persecution. Being reconciled to this truth is part of Christian life and growth.
- **Ongoing Trauma Support**: Churches and NGOs have established trauma counselling centers to help victims heal and return to normal life, recognizing that emotional recovery is as crucial as physical rebuilding.
- **Legal Advocacy**: Groups such as the Evangelical Alliance of Pakistan (EAP) and the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) conduct workshops, advocate for reform, and support victims.
- **Peaceful Protests**: Christians across Pakistan have organized peaceful demonstrations to raise their voices against injustice and call for governmental action.

Nadir Yosufi / Pexels




• **Refraining from Judgment**: We are careful not to judge Christian communities who have made the difficult decision that armed defence is the only way for them to survive.

• **International Engagement**: Christian leaders appeal to human rights organizations and the global Church to effectively influence the Pakistani government into providing greater protection for minorities.

## A UNIQUE AND VITAL ROLE FOR CHRISTIANS

Many Pakistanis live with post-traumatic stress and anxiety. Ours is far from the peaceful world God created and desires for humanity. Yet amidst the violence, Christians are called to be agents of God's peace.

Biblical peace, found throughout both the Old and New Testaments, implies wholeness, safety and restoration possible only through salvation in Christ. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, embodied this mission, and we as his followers are called to do the same.

As Jesus declared in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Despite failures and setbacks, Pakistan's Christians continue to be strengthened by God's grace in our calling to be peacemakers.

The battle against terrorism in our country cannot be won by the government and military alone. It requires the participation of all citizens. For Christians, being disciples of the Prince of Peace gives us a unique and vital role in this struggle.

Our message of peace must be promoted across all platforms. Masihi Isha›at Khana (MIK), a Christian publishing house, recognizes its vital role in sharing this message with Urdu-speaking communities. Our anchor, our hope, is in Jesus. ◆



**Peter Calvin** (christian.publisher@mik.org.pk) is the General Manager of Masihi Isha'at Khana (MIK), a publishing house based in Pakistan whose mission is to publish and provide quality Christian books on a non-profit basis for every Urdu speaker. MIK has published a number of titles aimed at helping readers understand the peace that God desires for his people—and how that peace can be experienced in everyday life. MIK won MAI's Robert B. Reekie Global Publisher Award in 2018. To learn more about MIK visit their website: mik.org.pk.



Mohammad Ishaq / Pexels

# Peace through the Word

Lawrence Darmani

The phone call that reached me that afternoon was ominous. As the CEO and editor of a Christian literature ministry, I received many phone calls daily in the course of my work, but this one was unexpected and rather troubling.

"Are you Brother Darmani?" the caller asked.

"Yes," I replied. "How may I help you?"

"We don't need your help! We've noticed that you write stories against our religion. We've called to warn you most severely. Your life is in danger here in this country if you continue to write that kind of stuff."





At the time, I was working and writing for *Step,* a Christian youth magazine in Kenya, publishing stories and articles of hope and encouragement to reach young people for the Lord. The caller was referring to the true story I wrote of a boy named Musa from Ghana.

When Musa became a Christian, he suffered persecution at the hands of his family, who followed a different religion. After being driven from home, a Christian family adopted Musa and encouraged him to continue his faith in Christ.

Despite the hostility Musa faced at home, he visited his sick father and prayed for him. Miraculously, the father was healed. Musa's father was so glad that he called him back home into the family, and encouraged him to continue his life as a Christian.

"Your Savior healed me," Musa's father told him. "Pray for me when you go to your church."

## PEACE IN THE MIDST OF HOSTILITY

The call was real and hostile enough to disturb my peace. The caller had called me "Brother Darmani" but by adding "Your life is in danger" he subscribed to an African proverb that says, "The dog will not bare its teeth at you unless it intends to bite you."

Despite the threat, I continued to write and publish as the Lord led me. But this gave me something to pray about. I trusted the Lord for protection and his words in Romans 12:18 "If possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with all people."

Even in places where gunfire wars are not fought openly, many people undergo mental trauma, emotional distress, and hopelessness—which account for the perennial suicide and substance abuse among young people.

It was this situation that gave birth to our publishing ministry. *Step* stands for **S**eeking **T**o **E**ncourage **P**eople. Through true-life stories and interactive sessions with readers through prayer and counselling, we help alleviate our readers' despondency.

I write and publish gospel tracts for free distribution. When passersby and travelers receive these tracts, they carry them to far-away places, to be read by people we don't know and whom we may otherwise not reach.

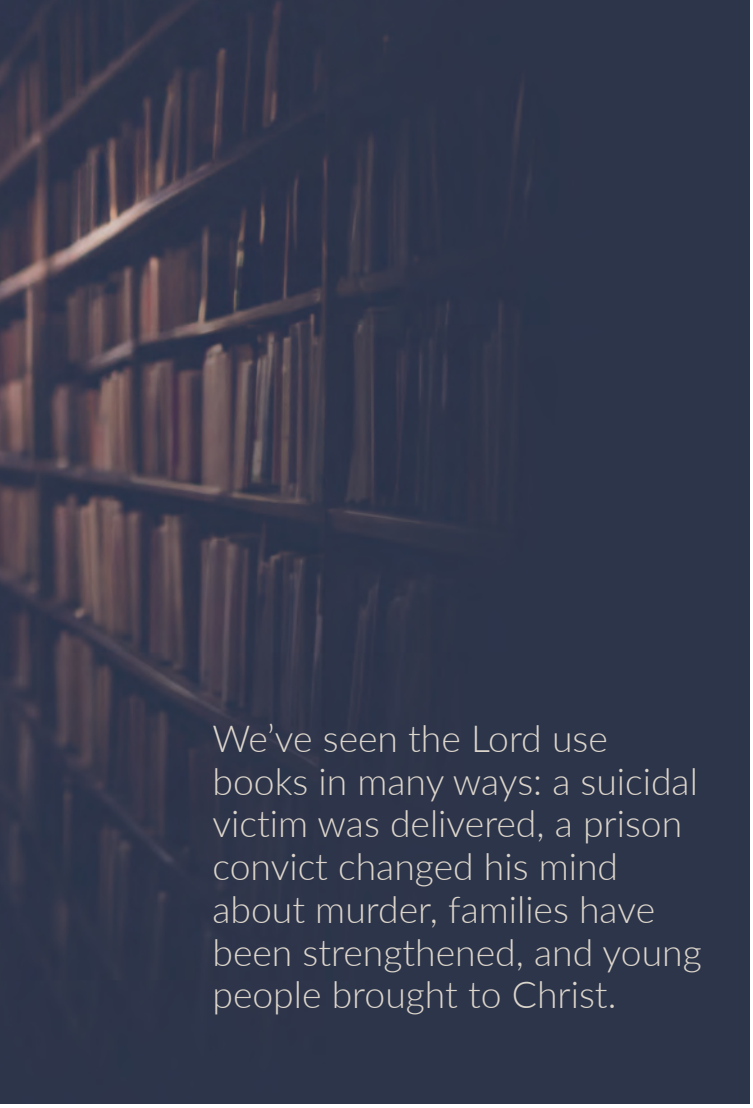
I also write a weekly newspaper column called "Weekend Talk" in Ghana's leading newspaper, the *Daily Graphic.* My objective is to draw readers' attention to the saving knowledge of Christ, and to offer encouragement to those who are downcast.

## THE MISSIONAL IMPACT OF LITERATURE

Author and pastor Max Lucado says, "Your writing can go where you cannot go, do what you cannot do, and say what you cannot say."



Previous page: Jesus Marchante / Pexels



We've seen the Lord use books in many ways: a suicidal victim was delivered, a prison convict changed his mind about murder, families have been strengthened, and young people brought to Christ.

In over forty years of writing and publishing, I have seen God's Word at work in schools, prisons, families, and workplaces where people's testimonies have drawn others to Christ.

One day, I taught students from an Islamic school. They had read several of my novels because the reading of supplementary readers in schools is encouraged by the government's ministry of education. These are Christian novels, and yet non-Christian students found them so appealing that a group of them paid a courtesy call to our office to learn more about writing! We had the opportunity to share Christ with them in addition to answering their questions on writing.

Over the years, Step has published several discipleship and Bible study books that are being used today by growing churches for evangelism and mission. We've seen the Lord use books in many ways: a suicidal victim was delivered, a prison convict changed his mind about murder, families have been strengthened, and young people brought to Christ.

## LIVING AMONG PEOPLE OF DIFFERENT FAITH

In my hometown in northern Ghana, we live among people of different faiths. In many Ghanaian communities, different religions exist. People of different faith meet on the same platform for governmental and non-governmental durbars and functions in peace. Christian love can help people of different religious and political leanings dwell together in peace.

But the story is not the same everywhere. I have read about the difficulties that some Christian publishers and writers have had to endure in the midst of violence in their countries. We in Ghana learnt about harsh persecutions and pray with Christians in West African countries.

During my travels as MAI-Africa regional trainer for many years, I have witnessed violence in places like Sierra Leone and South Sudan as we went to encourage Christian writers, publishers and booksellers.

The lack of publishing capital, means of transportation for distribution, and the hunger for Christian literature in places such as these call for consistent support from the global Church. May we pray, send, go and give. May the world recognize us by our love and not our fights.

## POWER IN THE WRITTEN WORD

The written word is powerful in drawing people to Christ and nurturing us to live for Him. "It is written," Jesus said repeatedly—and by recalling what is written, he received strength to say no to temptations and trials (Matthew 4:4-6).

From my four decades of ministry, I can testify that the Word of God is indeed power-packed. It is "written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

What we write and publish about Christ enables readers to believe in Him for salvation. Those facing hardship will do well not to give up in their calling. "In this world you will face trouble," says the Lord, "but take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Horatio Spafford lost his four daughters in a ship that sank in 1873. Earlier, he lost his son to fever, and fire burnt down his thriving business in Chicago. Yet, due to his deep faith and trust in the Lord, he wrote the hymns, "It is Well With My Soul" and "Peace Like a River."

Whether we encounter troubles in peacetime or trauma in times of conflict, the truth remains the same: Jesus, the Prince of Peace, offers this promise to all who respond to his call, "Come to me all who weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). ◆

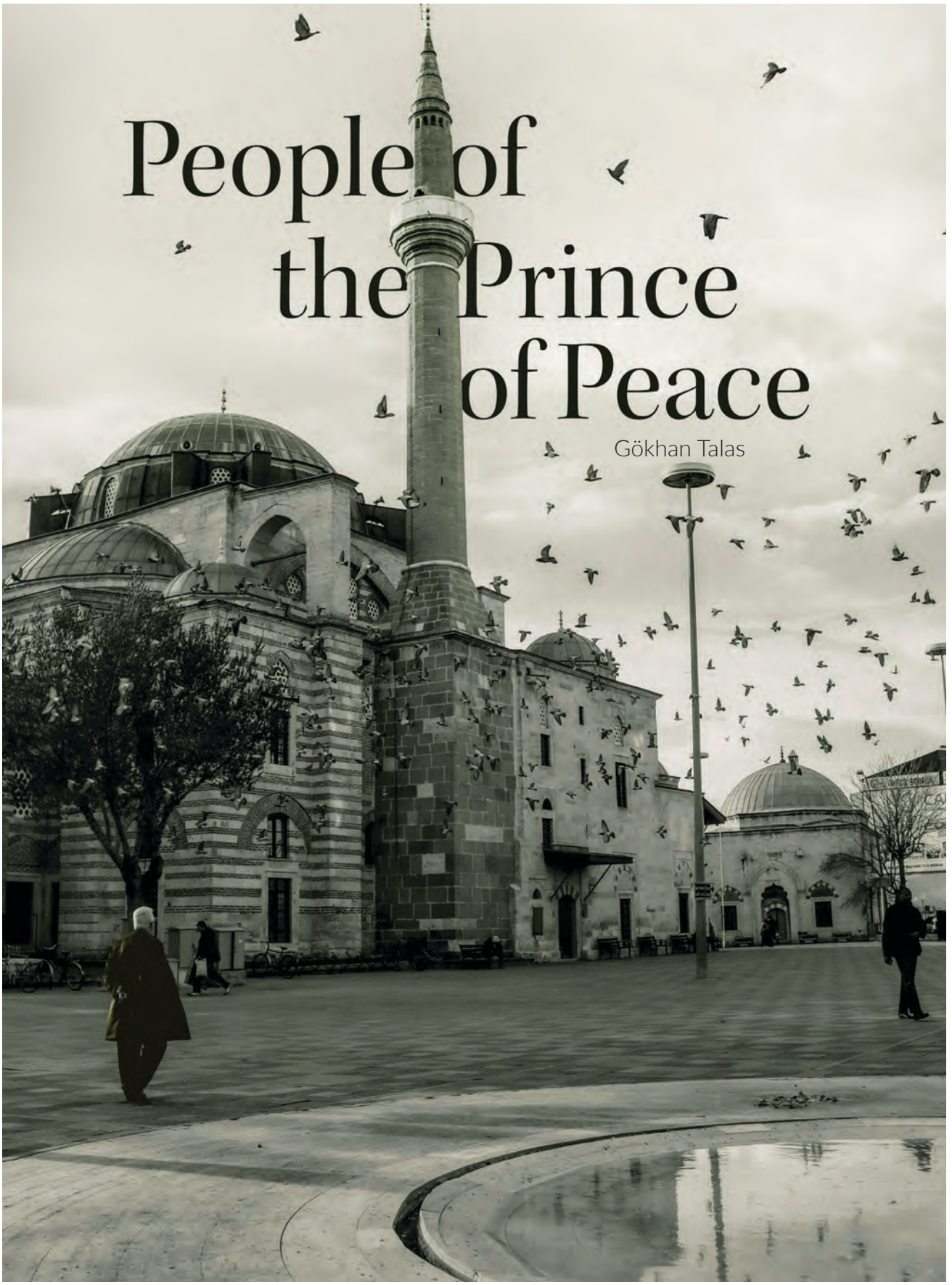


**Lawrence Darmani** is founding editor of Step Publishers in Ghana (instagram.com/step_publishers), which seeks to produce and distribute quality Christian books, particularly for young people. He has been involved in Christian publishing for over 35 years. Lawrence received MAI's Distinguished Trainer Award in 2012.

Itfeelslikefilm / Pexels

# People of the Prince of Peace

Gökhan Talas



Diye Saribas / Pexels

CESUR BARIŞ

TURKISH

# Barış Prensi'nin Halkı

Gökhan Talas

The truths of war echo in my mind through the stories and shadows that fill society. I grew up in Turkey, where cultures and histories clash. I've heard a lot of stories about wars, coups and terror forced on our country. The tension was there, but it was quiet.

As a child, I could tell that conflict was never far away—even if I couldn't hear bombs or see tanks. When politics came up, people stopped talking, and fear was always just below the surface of everyday life.

## LIVING IN QUIET STRESS AS A MINORITY

Being a Christian in Turkey means living in a place where others are often suspicious of you. I often say that the battlefield of identity is just as hard as the battlefield of war, because it leaves scars on the soul.

My neighbors stopped talking to me when they found out I was a Christian. Words became stiff, and invitations became fewer. My childhood friends became weak, as if my new identity had made me an outsider in my own country.

The fight between faith and belonging may seem small, but it was significant. It wasn't the clash of swords; it was the clash of silence that made you feel alone and made you wonder if you were welcome.

## A PEACE THAT GOES BEYOND

In that atmosphere of doubt, I found the answer in God's Word, not in my own power. Jesus' words in John 14:27 were a light along the way, "I leave you peace; I give you my peace. I don't give you what the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

This peace is different to any peace on Earth. The peace Jesus gives is nothing like the weak truces, political treaties, or awkward silences among neighbors. It was his presence, not the lack of conflict, that caused it.

I learned that peace wasn't just a break from stress; it was a Person, a peace that people couldn't even imagine. His peace seemed to change the story of my life, turning me from a victim of stress into a witness of hope.

Savaşın gerçekleri, toplumu dolduran hikayeler ve gölgeler aracılığıyla zihnimde yankılanıyor. Kültürlerin ve tarihlerin çatıştığı Türkiye'de büyüdüm. Ülkemize dayatılan savaşlar, darbeler ve terör hakkında pek çok hikaye duydum. Gerilim vardı, ama sessizdi.

Çocukken, bombaları duymamış ya da tankları görmemiş olsam da, çatışmanın hiç uzak olmadığını anlayabiliyordum. Siyaset konusu açıldığında insanlar konuşmayı keserdi ve korku her zaman günlük yaşamın hemen altında yatardı.

## AZINLIK OLARAK SESSIZ STRES İÇINDE YAŞAMAK

Türkiye'de Hristiyan olmak, başkalarının size sık sık şüpheyle yaklaştığı bir yerde yaşamak anlamına gelir. Kimlik savaşının savaş kadar zor olduğunu sık sık söylerim, çünkü ruhta izler bırakır.

Komşularım Hristiyan olduğumu öğrendiklerinde benimle konuşmayı kestiler. Konuşmalar sertleşti ve davetler azaldı. Çocukluk arkadaşlarım zayıfladı, sanki yeni kimliğim beni kendi ülkemde bir yabancı haline getirmiş gibi.

İnanç ve aidiyet arasındaki mücadele küçük görünebilir, ama önemliydi. Kılıçların çarpışması değildi; sessizliğin çarpışmasıydı, bu da sizi yalnız hissettiriyor ve hoş karşılanıp karşılanmadığınızı merak ettiriyordu.

## ÖTESINE GEÇEN BIR BARIŞ

Bu şüphe atmosferinde, cevabı kendi gücümde değil, Tanrı'nın Sözünde buldum. Yuhanna 14:27'deki (NIV) İsa'nın sözleri yolumda bir ışık oldu: "Size esenlik bırakıyorum, size benim esenliğimi veriyorum. Size dünyanın verdiği gibi vermiyorum. Kalbiniz sıkılmasın ve korkmayın."

Bu esenlik, dünyadaki hiçbir esenlikten farklıdır. İsa'nın verdiği esenlik, zayıf ateşkesler, siyasi anlaşmalar veya komşular arasındaki garip sessizlikler gibi değildir. Bunu sağlayan, çatışmanın olmaması değil, O'nun varlığıydı.

Barışın sadece stresten kurtulmak olmadığını öğrendim; barış, insanların hayal bile edemeyeceği bir Kişi idi. O'nun barışı, hayatımın hikayesini değiştirmiş, beni stresin kurbanı olmaktan umudun tanığına dönüştürmüştü.

### RESURRECTION AMID HARDSHIP

I didn't see bombs fall, but I did see the church's quiet resistance. People who believed in God gathered in small groups in homes with closed curtains to pray, read Scripture out loud in whispers, and remind each other that our story would not end with pain.

I remember how another church quietly made food packages for families who had to leave their homes. The world saw these actions as small, but they were more powerful than any preaching.

The church was always there to give blessings, help, and hope, even when systems broke down. Their giving and their love that no one could see showed that they belonged to a kingdom that was bigger than the one that hurt them.

It was a small resurrection—life blossoming where despair was about to take over.

The church showed that peace is not something that happens on its own. It is something that people do, something that lasts—and something that spreads.

> Peace during times of conflict is not a dream—it is a discipline. It's not a wish—it's a witness.

### A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE MALATYA ZIRVE MASSACRE

On April 18, 2007, three Christian brothers were tortured and killed at Malatya Zirve Publishing House. My wife and I were at the door that day. I called the police because I thought something was wrong.

I was painfully reminded that telling others about God's Word can be deadly. We had talked about persecution in abstract terms for a long time, but that day, persecution had a face, a voice—and a scream. That changed my conscience forever.

I dealt with questions no one wants to ask: Could following Christ cost me everything? Was I prepared to testify at that cost? In the dark, 2 Timothy 1:7 stood out to me. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of self-control."

The blood of our brothers preached the gospel's power. Their testimonies showed how radical Christian peace is—hope instead of anger, and forgiveness instead of revenge.

I'll never forget that. The massacre was both a wound and a calling for me. It showed that peace is not weak. It is made strong by suffering and forgiveness.

### THE COURAGEOUS SILENCE OF CHRIST

Jesus showed that peace is never something that just happens. He bravely asked those who didn't like him when he healed someone on the Sabbath, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4–5).

### ZORLUKLARIN ORTASINDA DIRILIŞ

Bombaların düştüğünü görmedim, ama kilisenin sessiz direnişini gördüm. Tanrı'ya inanan insanlar, perdeleri kapalı evlerde küçük gruplar halinde toplanarak dua ediyor, Kutsal Kitabı fısıltıyla yüksek sesle okuyor ve birbirlerine hikayemizin acı ile bitmeyeceğini hatırlatıyorlardı.

Başka bir kilisenin, evlerini terk etmek zorunda kalan aileler için sessizce yemek paketleri hazırladığını hatırlıyorum. Dünya bu eylemleri küçük görse de, bunlar herhangi bir vaazdan daha güçlüydü.

Kilise, sistemler çöktüğünde bile her zaman bereket, yardım ve umut vermek için oradaydı. Kimsenin göremediği cömertlikleri ve sevgileri, onlara acı veren krallıktan daha büyük bir krallığa ait olduklarını gösteriyordu.

Bu küçük bir dirilişti — umutsuzluğun hakim olmak üzere olduğu yerde hayatın yeşermesi.

Kilise, barışın kendiliğinden gerçekleşen bir şey olmadığını gösterdi. Barış, insanların yaptığı, kalıcı olan ve yayılan bir şeydir.

### MALATYA ZIRVE KATLIAMI'NA ILIŞKIN KIŞISEL BIR ANLATIM

18 Nisan 2007'de, üç Hıristiyan kardeş Malatya Zirve Yayınevi'nde işkence gördü ve öldürüldü. O gün eşim ve ben kapıdaydık. Bir sorun olduğunu düşündüğüm için polisi aradım.

Başkalarına Tanrı'nın Sözünü anlatmanın ölümcül olabileceğini acı bir şekilde hatırladım. Uzun zamandır zulüm hakkında soyut terimlerle konuşmuştuk, ama o gün zulüm bir yüz, bir ses ve bir çığlık aldı. Bu, vicdanımı sonsuza dek değiştirdi.

Kimsenin sormak istemediği sorularla uğraştım: Mesih'i takip etmek bana her şeyimi mal olabilir mi? Bu bedeli ödeyerek tanıklık etmeye hazır mıydım? Karanlıkta, 2. Timoteos 1:7 bana çarpıcı geldi. "Çünkü Tanrı bize korku ruhu vermedi, aksine güç, sevgi ve özdenetim ruhu verdi."

Kardeşlerimizin kanı, müjdenin gücünü vaaz etti. Onların tanıklıkları, Hıristiyan barışının ne kadar radikal olduğunu gösterdi: öfke yerine umut, intikam yerine bağışlama.

Bunu asla unutmayacağım. Katliam benim için hem bir yara hem de bir çağrıydı. Barışın zayıf olmadığını gösterdi. Acı ve bağışlama ile güçlenir.

### MESIH'IN CESUR SESSIZLIĞI

İsa, barışın asla kendiliğinden gerçekleşen bir şey olmadığını gösterdi. Şabat günü birini iyileştirdiğinde, kendisini sevmeyenlere cesurca sordu: "Şabat günü hangisi yasaldır: iyilik yapmak mı, kötülük yapmak mı, hayat kurtarmak mı, öldürmek mi?" (Markos 3:4–5, NIV).

Onun barışı güçlü, cesur ve hayat değiştiriciydi. İsa, söyleyecek bir şeyi olmadığı için sessiz kalmadı, sessizliğin kendisi barışın bir ifadesi olduğu için sessiz kaldı. O, adaletsizliğe göz yummuyordu, onu değiştiriyordu.

Mesih'in barışı, cesur olmanın ne anlama geldiğini yeniden düşünmemizi sağlar. Bu sadece korkmamamız değil, Tanrı'nın kazanacağına güvenmemizdir. Nefret intikam çağrısı yaptığında, sevgide sağlam durmalıyız. Dünya umutsuzluk çağrısı yaptığında, sakin kalmalıyız.

His peace was strong, brave and life-changing. Jesus wasn't silent because he didn't have anything to say, but because the silence itself was a statement of peace. He wasn't turning a blind eye to injustice, but changing it.

The peace of Christ makes us rethink what it means to be brave. It's not just that we're not afraid—it's that we trust that God will win. When hatred calls for revenge, we must stand firm in love. When the world calls for despair, we must stay calm.

### A CALL TO THE CHURCH AROUND THE WORLD

The things I've learned from living in Turkey and from tragedies like Malatya don't just belong to me. They belong to the whole church. So I ask you to respond by doing the following:

- **Pray**. Prayer is not the last thing you do. It's the first thing you do. When you pray for believers who are having a hard time, you are joining in their fight. Every whispered prayer is a sign that heaven is not quiet.
- **Togetherness**. As fellow believers, we need to share stories. When one part of the body hurts, all of the other parts hurt too. Being in solidarity means standing by each other, telling stories honestly—and not letting the voices of those we hear fade away.
- **Help**. The global church must share the load—whether it's through advocacy, resources, or being there. This may mean visiting someone, writing letters, giving money or just listening. True support for each other is working together in Christ.

What might you do in your daily life to make the peace of Christ more visible? Will you choose to forgive when others choose to get even? Instead of hating your enemies, will you pray for them? Will you help those who have been displaced, forgotten, or pushed to the edges by giving them food, shelter, or comfort?

Peace during times of conflict is not a dream—it is a discipline. It's not a wish—it's a witness. And it is possible in Christ.

### A CALL TO LIVE IN PEACE

Conflict affected my faith, but it didn't make me who I am. Through stories of refugees, social tension, and the shadow of Malatya, I learned that peace is strong, not weak. Christ, the One who wins over the world, is at the base of it.

The Church is called to be a people of peace not because we live in a world without conflict, but because we belong to the Prince of Peace. His gospel shines light on all dark places. His cross changes death into life. His resurrection shows that violence doesn't always win.

Being a person of peace doesn't mean you don't feel pain. It means to say that the kingdom of God is coming—even in the darkest places. ◆



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Mesih'in barışı, cesur olmanın ne anlama geldiğini yeniden düşünmemizi sağlar.

### DÜNYA ÇAPINDAKI KILISEYE ÇAĞRI

Türkiye'de yaşamaktan ve Malatya gibi trajedilerden öğrendiğim şeyler sadece bana ait değil. Bunlar tüm kiliseye ait. Bu yüzden sizden aşağıdakileri yapmanızı rica ediyorum:

- Dua edin. Dua, yaptığınız son şey değildir. Yaptığınız ilk şeydir. Zor günler geçiren inananlar için dua ettiğinizde, onların mücadelesine katılıyorsunuz. Her fısıltıyla edilen dua, cennetin sessiz olmadığına dair bir işarettir.
- Birliktelik. İnanç kardeşleri olarak hikayelerimizi paylaşmalıyız. Vücudun bir parçası acı çektiğinde, diğer tüm parçalar da acı çeker. Dayanışma içinde olmak, birbirimizin yanında olmak, hikayelerimizi dürüstçe anlatmak ve duyduğumuz seslerin kaybolmasına izin vermemek demektir.
- Yardım. Küresel kilise, savunuculuk, kaynaklar veya orada olmak yoluyla yükü paylaşmalıdır. Bu, birini ziyaret etmek, mektup yazmak, para vermek veya sadece dinlemek anlamına gelebilir. Birbirimize gerçek destek, Mesih'te birlikte çalışmaktır.

Mesih'in barışını daha görünür kılmak için günlük hayatınızda ne yapabilirsiniz? Başkaları intikam almayı seçtiğinde siz affetmeyi seçecek misiniz? Düşmanlarınızı nefret etmek yerine onlar için dua edecek misiniz? Yerinden edilmiş, unutulmuş veya kenara itilmiş kişilere yiyecek, barınak veya rahatlık sağlayarak onlara yardım edecek misiniz?

### BARIŞ IÇINDE YAŞAMAYA ÇAĞRI

Çatışma inancımı etkiledi, ama beni ben yapan şey bu değildi. Mültecilerin hikayeleri, sosyal gerilimler ve Malatya'nın gölgesi sayesinde, barışın zayıf değil, güçlü olduğunu öğrendim. Dünyayı yenen Mesih, barışın temelidir.

Kilise, çatışmasız bir dünyada yaşadığımız için değil, Barış Prensi'ne ait olduğumuz için barışçı bir halk olmakla görevlidir. Onun müjdesi tüm karanlık yerleri aydınlatır. Onun çarmıhı ölümü yaşa dönüştürür. Onun dirilişi, şiddetin her zaman kazanmadığını gösterir.

Barışçı bir insan olmak, acı hissetmediğiniz anlamına gelmez. Bu, en karanlık yerlerde bile Tanrı'nın krallığının geldiğini söylemek anlamına gelir. ◆

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Anastasiia Chaikovska / Pexels

# A Call for People of Peace in Ukraine

Andriy Kravchenko

I live in a city that has suffered relatively little (so far) from the war in Ukraine. We are not under round-the-clock bombing, and not under occupation.

Yet we, like the entire country, live and feel the impact of the war on our lives every day. We receive reports of massive missile attacks, work with constant power outages, see off friends and relatives to the ranks of the Ukrainian Defense Forces—and await news of their lives at the front.

## HOW THE WAR BEGAN

The war in Ukraine began almost 12 years ago with the annexation of Crimea and the capture of part of Donbas by Russian troops. Killings of civilians took place; I read with horror of the brutal massacre of Christians in the city of Slovyans'k.

In June 2014, militants tortured and killed four Pentecostal Christians—deacons Volodymyr Velichko and Viktor Bradarsky, as well as the pastor's two sons, Ruvym and Albert Pavenko. They were kidnapped after a service and later found tortured in a mass grave.

It was then that I realized Ukraine is facing a spiritual as well as a physical battle. Evil in its purest form seeks to capture and kill, rape and rob our people.



# Бути людиною миру посеред війни

Андрій Кравченко

UKRANIAN

Я живу в місті, яке (поки що) майже не постраждало від війни в Україні. Ми не перебуваємо під цілодобовими бомбардуваннями і окупацією.

Проте, як і вся країна, ми щодня відчуваємо вплив війни на наше життя. Ми отримуємо повідомлення про масові ракетні обстріли, працюємо в умовах постійних відключень електроенергії, проводжаємо друзів і родичів до лав Збройних сил України — і чекаємо новин про їхнє життя на фронті.

## Ukraine is facing a spiritual as well as a physical battle

At the beginning of 2022, it was clear that the next stage of the war was inevitable. We began preparing for military action and a possible occupation, including evacuation to the west. The war entered a stage of positional battles, like those of the First or Second World War.

We are grateful to God and our soldiers for their protection and look forward to the end of this horror. We thank the Lord every day—after all, every day and every night we are in mortal danger, and wake to live to see another day. Despite the horror around us, we must get out of bed every morning and go to work.

### PERSEVERING WITH CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING

The city of Olexandriya, where our publishing house is situated, is located 200 kilometers from the nearest front line. Artillery shells do not reach us, but missiles and drones constantly fly over our city.

Large cities around us have been attacked many times over the past four years. Missile attacks occur several times a month; the rubble takes several days to dismantle, under which the remains of dozens of victims remain. Every week, we receive news about the death of our citizens who serve in the army.

No one knows for sure where the next attack will be directed. Every day, from 100 to 500 drones with warheads weighing up to 90 kg are launched onto Ukraine. When such a drone hits a house, only ruins and the bodies of the unfortunate residents who lived in it remain at that place.

Up to 10 million Ukrainians have become refugees in Europe or other countries of the world. The vast majority of them will never return. I decided to stay in Ukraine and continue printing Christian books and distributing them. Our only hope is in the Lord.

The situation is very difficult. Several Christian publishing houses have ceased to exist, and others are barely surviving. Many bookstores have closed. The Christian publishing industry

### ЯК ПОЧАЛАСЯ ВІЙНА

Війна в Україні почалася майже 12 років тому з анексії Криму та захоплення частини Донбасу російськими військами. В той час відбулися перші бойові зіткнення і вбивства мирних жителів. Тоді я з жахом прочитав про жорстоку розправу над віруючими у місті Слов'янську.

У червні 2014 року бойовики катували і вбили чотирьох християн-п'ятидесятників — дияконів Володимира Величка і Віктора Брадарського, а також двох синів пастора, Рувима і Альберта Павенків. Їх викрали після служіння, а пізніше знайшли закатованими в братській могилі.

Саме тоді я усвідомив, що Україна веде не тільки з фізичну, а й духовну битву. Зло у чистому вигляді прийшло захоплювати і вбивати, ґвалтувати і грабувати наш народ.

На початку 2022 року стало зрозуміло, що наступний етап війни є неминучим. Ми почали готуватися до військових дій і можливої окупації, включаючи евакуацію на захід. Після того, як ворог зазнав невдачі і був вигнаний з більшої частини захоплених територій, війна перейшла у стадію позиційних боїв на кшталт Першої або Другої Світової воїн.

Ми вдячні Богу і нашим солдатам за захист і з нетерпінням чекаємо на кінець цього жаху. Ми дякуємо Господу щодня — адже щодня і щоночі ми перебуваємо в смертельній небезпеці і прокидаємося, щоб побачити ще один день. Незважаючи на всі жахи навколо нас, ми мусимо щоранку вставати з ліжка і йти на роботу.

### НАПОЛЕГЛИВІСТЬ У ХРИСТИЯНСЬКОМУ ВИДАВНИЦТВІ

Місто Олександрія, де розташоване наше видавництво, знаходиться за 200 кілометрів від найближчої лінії фронту. Артилерійські снаряди до нас не долітають, але ракети і дрони постійно пролітають над нашим містом.

Великі міста навколо нас за останні чотири роки зазнали численних атак. Ракетні удари відбуваються кілька разів на місяць. На розчищення завалів, під якими залишаються останки десятків жертв, йде кілька днів. Щотижня ми отримуємо звістки про загибель наших городян, які служать в армії.

Ніхто не знає напевно, куди буде спрямований наступний удар. Щодня у напрямку України ворог запускає від 100 до 500 дронів з бойовою частиною вагою до 90 кг. Коли такий дрон влучає в будинок, на цьому місці залишаються лише руїни і тіла нещасних




here has regressed to the level of the early 1990s. This is also the enemy's goal.

Life during war is not easy, but we have no choice. Despite the daily challenges, we as Christians are called to carry the light of salvation to those around us. We have to adapt. We carefully read the Bible passages about passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and other passages about the trials of heroes of faith.

We spend a lot of energy and resources maintaining our existence, such as providing electricity and heat for our publishing house. As I write this, the situation with electricity in Ukraine is extremely difficult. In the middle of winter, blackouts last 16-18 hours a day as electricity sources are deliberately being destroyed.

Thanks to foreign friends, we are building our own solar station with a backup power system and hope to complete this work this year. Under other circumstances, we could direct these resources to

мешканців, які в ньому жили.

До 10 мільйонів українців стали біженцями в Європі або інших країнах світу. Переважна більшість з них ніколи не повернеться. Я вирішив залишитися в Україні і продовжувати друкувати християнські книги та розповсюджувати їх. Наша єдина надія – в Господі.

Ситуація дуже складна. Кілька християнських видавництв припинили своє існування, а інші ледь виживають. Багато книжкових магазинів закрилися. Християнська видавнича галузь тут повернулася до рівня початку 1990-х років. Це також є метою ворога.

Життя під час війни нелегке, але у нас немає вибору. Незважаючи на щоденні виклики, ми, як християни, покликані нести світло спасіння тим, хто нас оточує. Ми мусимо пристосовуватися. Ми уважно читаємо

Agin Kargi / Pexels



other purposes, but the very fact of our survival depends on the availability of energy.

### OPEN DOORS FOR THE GOSPEL

Times of turmoil open up amazing prospects for the gospel. Many doors that were closed before the war are now opening. Since 2014, our publishing house had been actively participating in a joint project called "Family Holiday," an evangelistic event for children and parents where they hear the gospel and are invited to church.

Starting in 2022, it has become easier to hold such events. People want to hear encouragement; they are looking for ways to change their lives. We have visited many regions located near the front line and have always heard words of gratitude for our work.

During these years, many new people have come to the churches to replace many Christians who were evacuated abroad. The field of activity has opened much wider—and churches that

біблійні уривки про проходження долиною смерті та інші уривки про випробування героїв віри.

Ми витрачаємо багато енергії та ресурсів на підтримку нашого існування, наприклад, на забезпечення видавництва електроенергією та опаленням. Зараз ситуація з електрикою в Україні надзвичайно складна. В середині зими віялові відключення тривають по 16-18 годин на день, оскільки джерела генерації навмисно руйнуються.

Завдяки іноземним друзям ми будуємо власну сонячну станцію з резервною системою живлення і сподіваємося завершити ці роботи вже цього року. За інших обставин ми могли б спрямувати ці ресурси на інші цілі, але сам факт нашого виживання залежить від наявності енергії.

### ВІДКРИТІ ДВЕРІ ДЛЯ ЄВАНГЕЛІЯ

Часи неспокою відкривають дивовижні перспективи для Євангелія. Багато дверей, які були зачинені до війни, тепер відкриваються. З 2014 року наше видавництво бере участь у спільному проекті під назвою «Сімейне свято» — євангелізаційному заході для дітей і батьків, де вони слухають Євангеліє і отримують запрошення



Michalo Nyka / Pexels

Amidst the horrors of war, people are actively seeking God. They demand answers to difficult but important questions of life.

want to serve their communities have taken advantage of this opportunity.

Another field for evangelism is the army. The Ukrainian Defense Forces number up to 2 million soldiers. And the army is very positive about the service of military chaplains in its ranks. Many Christians who were called up to the army serve as such chaplains, performing spiritual work.

### THE NEED FOR WORKERS FOR A RIPE HARVEST

Amidst the horrors of war, people are actively seeking God. They demand answers to difficult but important questions of life.

Unfortunately, I must note that the world community—including the Church—seems to be increasingly indifferent to the disaster that is happening in Ukraine. There is a lot of work, but not enough workers. There are few missionaries serving long-term here. Several of those I knew have left.

This is very sad. The Lord calls and provides a field for labor—but there are not enough reapers.

If we recall the great missionaries of the past, they all carried out their work in extremely dangerous places and countries. The first apostles of Christ risked their lives to spread the Good News. The apostle Andrew reached the lands of modern Ukraine, Peter preached in Rome, and Thomas preached in India.

One area of effort today is publishing Christian books that will point people to find the only right path to the Lord through Jesus Christ. I consider all who continue to distribute Christian literature to be heroes of faith. We try to fulfill our mission in the place and country where we were lucky enough to be born.

Our work is not in vain, and we will receive a reward when we find ourselves before the throne of God. ◆



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до церкви.

З 2022 року стало легше проводити такі заходи. Люди хочуть чути слова заохочення, вони шукають способи змінити своє життя. Ми відвідали багато регіонів, розташованих поблизу лінії фронту, і завжди чули слова вдячності за нашу роботу.

Протягом цих років до церков прийшло багато нових людей, які замінили християн, які евакуювалися за кордон. Поле діяльності стало набагато ширшим, і церкви, які хочуть служити своїм громадам, скористалися цією можливістю.

Ще одним полем для євангелізації є армія. Українські сили оборони налічують до 2 мільйонів солдатів. І армія дуже позитивно ставиться до служби військових капеланів у своїх лавах. Багато християн, яких призвали до армії, служать такими капеланами, виконуючи духовну роботу.

### ПОТРЕБА В ПРАЦІВНИКАХ ДЛЯ ЗРІЛОГО ВРОЖАЮ

Серед жахів війни люди активно шукають Бога. Вони вимагають відповідей на складні, але важливі питання життя.

На жаль, мушу зазначити, що світова спільнота, включаючи Церкву, здається, стає дедалі байдужою до катастрофи, яка відбувається в Україні. Роботи багато, але робітників не вистачає. Тут мало місіонерів, які служать довгостроково. Кілька з тих, кого я знав, поїхали.

Це дуже сумно. Господь кличе і дає поле для праці, але жниварів не вистачає.

Якщо згадати великих місіонерів минулого, то всі вони виконували свою роботу в надзвичайно небезпечних місцях і країнах. Перші апостоли Христа ризикували своїм життям, щоб поширювати Добру Новину. Апостол Андрій дійшов до земель сучасної України, Петро проповідував у Римі, а Хома — в Індії.

Одним із напрямків нашої діяльності сьогодні є видання християнських книг, які вказують людям єдиний правильний шлях до Господа через Ісуса Христа. Я вважаю всіх, хто продовжує поширювати християнську літературу, героями віри. Ми намагаємося виконувати свою місію в тому місці і тій країні, де нам пощастило народитися.

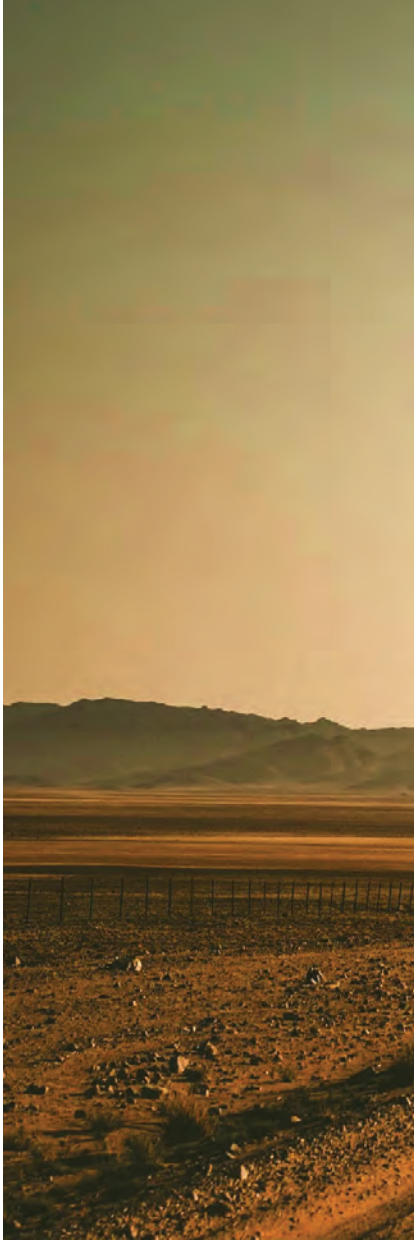
Наша праця не марна, і ми отримаємо нагороду, коли опинимося перед престолом Божим. ◆

**Андрій Кравченко** (andrey@ezdra.com) є директором християнського видавництва «Ездра», Україна (www.ezdra.com), яке прагне надати місцевим церквам інструменти для служіння своїм громадам. Видавництво «Ездра» отримало премію MAI 2025 Robert B. Reekie Global Publisher Award за розповсюдження значущих книг для дітей та сімей в умовах війни.

STANDING FIRM

# A Call I Couldn't Ignore

Israel Elazar



God reached out to me quite early in life. I was privileged to come from a Christian home. Although I was raised by my single mother—my father passed away mysteriously while he was away in 2005—my mother did an extraordinary job nurturing me in the way of the Lord. I remember her taking me along to prayer meetings from a very young age, even when I barely understood what was happening beyond hearing the Word of God and praying together.

Yet being raised in a Christian home did not make me right with God. I struggled with pornography addiction, even though my heart longed for God. Throughout my secondary school years, I attended a missionary-founded school. I was consistently exposed to Scripture and prayer, and encountered several altar calls, but rarely responded.

One particular day remains unforgettable. During our usual Friday fellowship hour, a senior student came to minister in our class. For the first time in my life, I felt that God had come specifically for me. It was as though he set that moment apart to seek me until I was found.

As the message was preached, every word pierced my heart. I became so overwhelmed that I began to weep openly at the back of the classroom.



(This was unusual for me, as I was typically one of those who disrupted such solemn moments with jokes and laughter.) I knew without a doubt that I was a sinner in need of God's forgiveness. When the altar call was made, I rose—still in tears—and surrendered my life to Jesus. Since then, I have sought to serve God and his kingdom in every little way I can.

## ROLE-PLAYING PREACHING AND A CALLING TO NIGERIA'S YOUTH

A year later, I began sensing a persistent inner prompting that God was calling me to serve him. I didn't initially know how to interpret this experience, but I carried it quietly in my heart as it grew stronger each day. I struggled with approaching spiritual leaders because I often felt unworthy of being used by God.

Yet, whenever I was alone at home, I would find myself role-playing sermons as though preaching to an audience. These moments could last for an hour, and I would stop only when I sensed someone approaching.

In church, I was consistently drawn to the pastor, observing how they ministered, how God spoke to them, how they taught the Word, and so much more.

After graduation, upon admission to university, the inner nudging had become unmistakably strong. I felt as though ignoring it would be equivalent to wasting my life.

During this time, God led me to a local church pastor. I asked him to pray that I would understand how God wanted me to serve him on campus. He prayed and told me that God said he would reveal his direction before I left for university.

A few weeks later, while spending time with my best friend—who also loved the Lord—I received a strong impression that God wanted me to return to my secondary school and preach the gospel to my juniors, much like how I myself had been converted.

Francesco Ungaro / Pexels

We prayed and fasted, believing that word, and then stepped out in faith.

This marked the beginning of a series of evangelical outreaches, as we soon expanded into neighboring schools to share the gospel. I often stayed behind after our meetings to answer students' questions, and began distributing prayer cards, inviting them to write down their requests so I could pray for them while away. Some requests needed additional attention, prompting me to seek out students to provide guidance. Over time, this became a way of life.

When I arrived at university, my heart was heavily burdened to continue secondary school outreach. I needed both a platform and proper guidance, especially since I had moved from northern Nigeria to the west. I soon discovered an outreach ministry that shared my passion for reaching young people. I joined immediately, and this became my primary focus throughout my seven years on campus. God was faithful, bringing many into salvation and genuine transformation. I also served among teenagers at my local church.

I have always loved ministering to young people, because I believe God has given me the grace to teach His Word with simplicity. Youth ministry is, in my view, an essential ministry. I believe Satan seeks to capture people especially during this formative season of their lives, and the choices they make at this stage often determine how far they will go. Ministering to them feels like correcting the past while shaping the future.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AMIDST THE DIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

One encouraging discovery I've made is that preaching in western Nigeria is far more accepted—in many places, Islam and Christianity's places of worship peacefully stand side by side. God gave us open doors to preach the gospel during school assemblies, and we ministered to thousands of young people, sometimes to audiences of 2,000 or more at once.

What I find challenging is that in today's world, many young people question the gospel and its power. One of the greatest challenges is helping them see that the Word of God remains relevant and powerful to set their lives in order, and that following Jesus is necessary even when peer pressure suggests otherwise.

Northern Nigeria remains difficult, easily inflamed by religious tensions. Ministering in secondary schools often attracts punishments or sanctions against the schools, unless they are predominantly Christian-owned.

We hear testimonies of churches being burnt down or raided—yet believers often resume services almost immediately

Local missionaries and Christians encounter severe persecution such as farmland seizure, forced marriages, family rejection, displacement and threats to life.

Despite this, discipleship movements are beginning to grow as Christians love their communities through various means such as rural schools, medical outreaches and recycling projects. Pastors and missionaries are also being trained to strengthen new believers.

Missionaries and new Christians face ongoing threats, yet continue serving in areas many missions have abandoned. We hear testimonies of churches being burnt down or raided—yet believers often resume services almost immediately and gather together to rebuild, demonstrating their unwavering zeal for God.

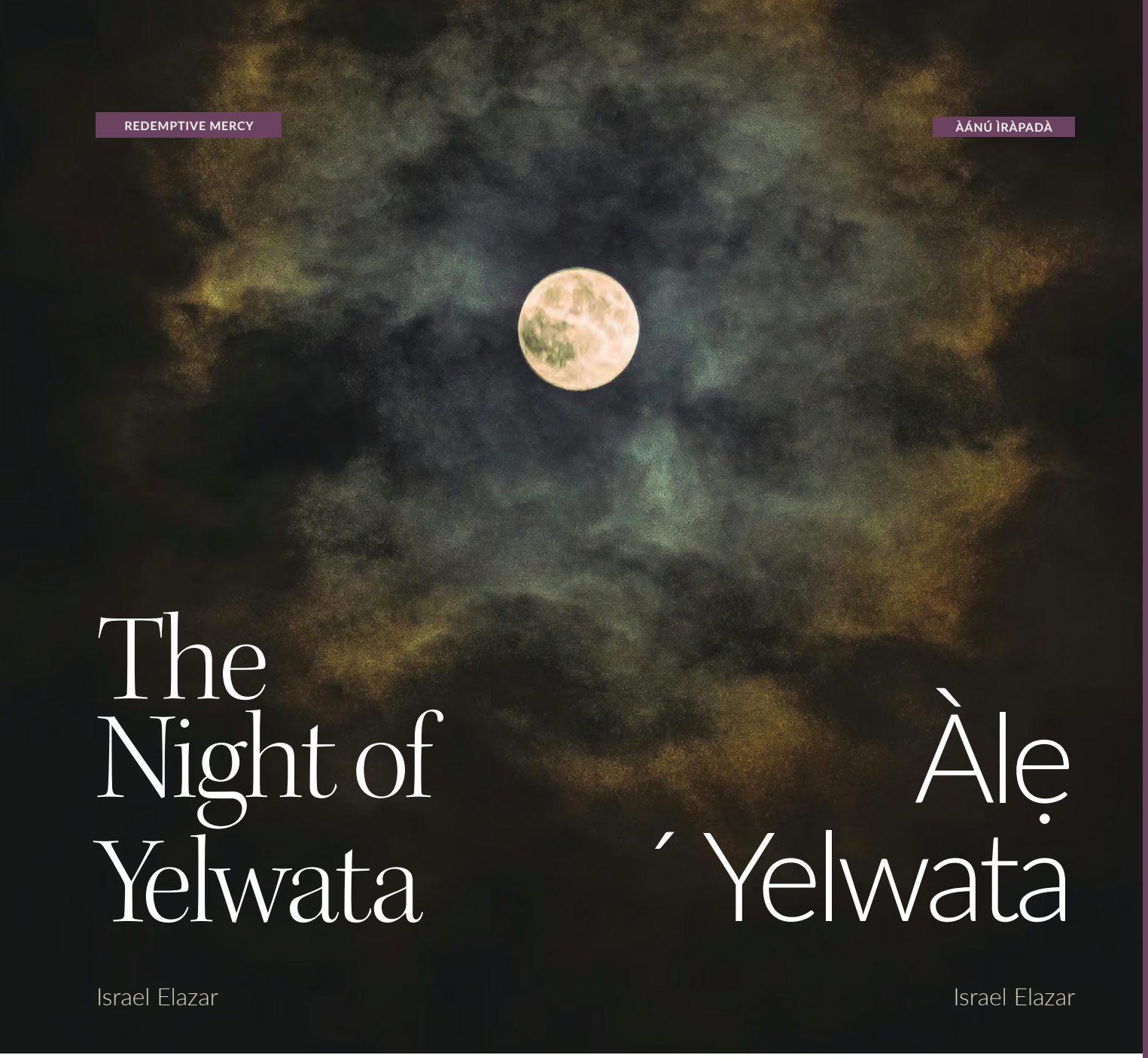
## PERSEVERING IN FAITH, STANDING ALONGSIDE NIGERIA'S CHRISTIANS

Remembering what Jesus prophesied about the last days, it is no surprise that these events are unfolding. Even on social media, there is a subtle but growing hostility toward Christians, pastors, and churches, and many people look for any opportunity to ridicule the faith.

I believe the Nigerian church, particularly our church associations, must do more than pray. We can take proactive steps to support persecuted Christians, and establish strong welfare structures to care for displaced people. Our church leaders can use their platforms to stand with their congregations, to speak courageously to our government and society. Christians in positions of influence around the world can also help.

I would also ask that the global church remember us in prayer, just as we regularly pray here in Nigeria for persecuted Christians across the world. We need deep and consistent prayers. We do not want to face a future where we must choose between death, fleeing or denying our faith. Although many regard Nigeria as a Christian revival center, we should not be left alone in this struggle. Pray that we may all remain faithful to Jesus and serve him wholeheartedly. ◆

**Israel Elazar** is a Nigerian author, evangelist and youth counsellor. His short story won MAI's 2025 writing contest on People of Peace in Places of War.



# The Night of Yelwata

Israel Elazar

# Àlẹ́ ´ Yelwata

Israel Elazar



Miriam woke to the sound of the wind scraping against the cracked zinc roof. The sound reminded her of whispers, the kind that carried rumors through Yelwata before anything terrible happened. She turned on the mat, pulling her youngest son closer. His breath was warm against her chest. Dawn had not yet broken, but she could feel it waiting behind the veil of darkness, uncertain whether it wanted to arrive.

Her neighbor Ngoana had come the evening before, her voice trembling as she said, "They burnt two villages across the river. They say the men came on motorcycles again." Miriam had smiled, that careful smile she

YORUBA

Miriam jí sí ìró afẹ́fẹ́ tí ń fà lé orí tèrè tí yà lórí orùlé símîì. Ìró náà ràn án létí bí ẹni pé ẹnikan ń ṣòrò dígí-dígí, bí irú àsọyé tí ó máa ń rìn kiri gbogbo Yelwata kí ohun burúkú tó ṣẹlẹ̀. Ó yí ara rẹ̀ sórí àpèrè tí ó wà lórí, ó sì fà ọmọ kékeré jùlọ rẹ̀ mọ́ ara. Ìmí tí ọmọ náà ń mí gbóná sí àyà rẹ̀. Ọ̀sán kò tîì mọ, ṣùgbọ́n Miriam lè ní ìmọ̀lára pé ó ń bẹ lẹ́yìn àwọ̀ òkùnkùn, bí ẹni pé ó ń ṣiyèméjì bóyá ó fẹ́ wọlé tàbí bẹ́ẹ̀ kọ.

Aládùúgbò rẹ̀, Ngoana, ti wá sí ilé ní irọ̀lẹ́ ọjọ́ tí ó kọjá, ohùn rẹ̀ ń mì bí ẹni pé ó bẹ̀rù, nígbà tó sọ pé, "Wọ́n ti sun abúlé méjì lé ewọ̀n ọ̀sà sí i. Wọ́n ní àwọn ọkùnrin náà tún dé lórí okò ayọ́kẹ́lẹ́ bí ìgbà tèlẹ̀." Miri-

… peace was not the absence of war but the courage to stand still when the ground trembled.

used when fear was a guest she refused to entertain. “God will protect us,” she had said, even though her heart had clenched like a fist.

Since her husband Samuel’s death two years ago, Miriam had learned to speak faith even when her throat tasted of ash. Samuel had been one of the farmers killed in the first wave of attacks. People said his body had been found near the yam heaps, machete still clutched in his hand as if he had tried to guard the land he loved so much. Miriam still dreamed of that day sometimes, the smell of smoke, the shouting, her eldest child screaming that Papa was not coming home.

The church bell rang faintly in the distance, the cracked tone swallowed by the wind. It was a signal, though most people had long stopped attending evening prayers. Pastor Jacob insisted they must continue, that worship was resistance, that peace was not the absence of war but the courage to stand still when the ground trembled. Miriam believed him, but she also feared what courage might cost.

By afternoon, the air thickened with tension. The children were restless, chasing a chicken through the compound, their laughter thin and nervous. Miriam scolded them softly, though she loved the sound. She busied herself pounding yam and humming a hymn she no longer finished because the last note always broke inside her.

When dusk fell, a red haze settled over the village. The elders gathered near the church, their voices low. Miriam saw Pastor Jacob lift his Bible skyward. “The Lord is our refuge,” he said, and though his tone was strong, his eyes carried the sadness of someone who had buried too many of his flock.

“Should we run?” Ngoana whispered beside her.

“Where will we go?” Miriam replied. “Everywhere is burning.”

Night arrived too quickly. It came with the hum of insects and the uneasy silence that precedes disaster. Miriam put her children to bed and sat by the doorway, listening.

FROM AFAR CAME THE FAINT POP OF GUNFIRE, like fireworks swallowed by distance. She told herself it was hunters, though she knew better.

am rẹ́rìn-ín, èrín kékeré tí ó máa ń lo nígbà tí ó bá pinnu pé kò ní gba ibẹ̀rù wọ ilé rẹ̀. “Ọlọ́run yóò dá wa bó,” ni ó sọ, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé ọkàn rẹ̀ ti di yíká bí ika ọwọ́ tí a ti fà mọ́ra.

Láti ìgbà tí ọkọ rẹ̀ Samuel kú ọdún méjì sẹ́yìn, Miriam ti kọ́ ara rẹ̀ nípa pé kí ó máa sọ ọ̀rọ̀ ìgbàgbọ́ bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé ahọ́n rẹ̀ máa ń dùn bí òkúta tí iná ti jẹ. Samuel jẹ́ ọkan lára àwọn agbe tí wọ́n pa ní ìkọ̀kọ̀ àkọ́kọ́ tí ìjẹ̀pàgbẹ̀yà náà bẹ̀rẹ̀. Wọ́n ní a rí okú rẹ̀ lẹ́bàà ikọ̀ asọ isu, ọbẹ̀ dúdú ní ọwọ́ rẹ̀ bí ẹni pé ó gbìmọ̀ láti dá àgbègbè tí ó nífẹ̀ẹ́ sí jù lọ dúró. Títí di òní, Miriam ṣi máa ń lá nípa ọjọ́ náà nígbà mîì, oorun eré tí ń jí, ariwo tí ń yí ká, àti bí ọmọ rẹ̀ àkọ́bí ṣe ń kigbe pé Baba ò ní padà wálé mọ́.

Ìlù ṣọ́ọ̀ṣì ń dun ní jíjìnnà, ìró tí ó ti bàjẹ́ tí afẹ́fẹ́ ń mì kúrò nípa. Ó jẹ́ àmì, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé òpọ̀ ènìyàn ti kọ́ sílẹ̀ pé kí wọ́n lọ sí àdúrá ìrọ̀lẹ́ mọ́. Pasítọ̀ Jacob ń tẹ̀síwájú bí ó ti kọ́kọ́ sọ pé wọ́n gbọ́dọ̀ bá a lọ, pé ìjọsìn jẹ́ ìbànújẹ̀jẹ̀ ogun, pé àlàáfíà kì í ṣe pé ogun ò sí, ṣùgbọ́n pé àgbọ́ra jẹ́ láti dúró nígbà tí ilẹ̀ bá ń mí. Miriam gbà pé òótọ́ ló sọ, ṣùgbọ́n ó tún bẹ̀rù ohun tí àgbọ́ra lè gba lọ́wọ́ ènìyàn.

Ní ọ̀sán, afẹ́fẹ́ di kúnra, inú aládùúgbò sì dà bí ẹni pé ẹ̀mí ń fò níkàn. Àwọn ọmọ kékeré kò ní sùúrù mọ́, wọ́n ń lé adìẹ káàkiri àgbàlá, èrín wọn ṣe bí ẹni pé ó ní abúùkù inú. Miriam bá wọn nílẹ̀ ní rọ̀ọ̀rọ̀, bó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé ó nífẹ̀ẹ́ si èrín wọn. Ó dá ara rẹ̀ lórí ní lílù isu ní ilé àti ní hùmù orin ìjọ tí ó kọ̀ láti parí mọ́ nítorí pé note tó gbẹ̀yìn máa ń bàjẹ́ níkàn ní inú rẹ̀.

Ní ìrọ̀lẹ́, a yí abúlé náà ká pupa bí ẹ̀jẹ̀. Àwọn àgbàlagbà kó jọ ní iwájú ṣọ́ọ̀ṣì, ohùn wọn ní ìsàlẹ̀. Miriam rí Pasítọ̀ Jacob bí ó ṣe gbé Bíbélì rẹ̀ sókè. “Olúwa ni ààbò wa,” lo sọ, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé ohùn rẹ̀ lagbara, ojú rẹ̀ rú ìbànújẹ̀ ẹni tí ó ti sin ọmọ-ọdọ rẹ̀ púpọ̀ jù lọ.

Ngoana bẹ̀rẹ̀ ní ìsàlẹ̀ ohùn, “Ṣé ká sá lọ bí?”

Miriam wí pé, “A ó lọ síbo? Ọ̀nà gbogbo ń jó.”

Ó yara di òru. Ó wá pẹ̀lú ìró kokoro alẹ́ tí ń hú, àti pẹ̀lú ìdákẹ́jẹ́ tí ó máa ń ṣáájú ìjàmbá. Miriam fi àwọn ọmọ rẹ̀ sùn, ó sì jókòó ní ẹnu ilẹ̀kùn, ó ń fetí sí ayika.

Láti jíjìnna, ìró ibọn kékeré bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í dun, bí èrọ ìṣeré ti a ti lé sí ibùsùn. Ó sọ fún ara rẹ̀ pé ó jẹ́ àwọn apẹ́ja, bí ó tilẹ̀ jẹ́ pé ó mọ̀ pé ìròyìn náà jìnà sí òótọ́.

Lẹ́yìn náà ni ariwo yìí dé—ariwo okò ayọ́kẹ́lẹ́ tí ń ya òru sílẹ̀, ìró àwọn ọkùnrin tí ń ké ìpaniyan, àti ìró ibọn tí ń ya afẹ́fẹ́. Àwọn adìẹ tuka káàkiri. Ọmọ kékeré jùlọ Miriam jí, ó ń sunkún ní kíkán. Ó gbà á sókè, ó sì fọwọ́ hàn bí ó ṣe ń sọ fún ọmọbìnrin rẹ̀ pé kí ó dakẹ́ gbọ̀ngbò. Oorun iná dé sí wọn, oorun tí ó lágbára tí ó sì lẹ̀gbà. Ní ibi tí kò jìnnà, obìnrin kan ké lójú-kúrò.

“Ọlọ́run, ṣàánú,” ni Miriam wí ní ìsàlẹ̀ ohùn.

Ó ṣí ilẹ̀kùn èhìn ilé, ó sì bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í darí àwọn ọmọ rẹ̀ lọ sí ibi tí wọ́n ti ń pa isu sílẹ̀ lẹ́yìn ilé. Ilé ìkòkò isu náà ní ihò kan ní ìsàlẹ̀, ibi tí wọ́n ti fi máa bọ́ ní ọ̀rúndún ṣáájú nígbà tí àwọn ajinigbé máa ń wá gbà ilẹ̀ àwọn baba wọn. Ó sọ fún àwọn ọmọ pé kí wọ́n wọlé sí ihò náà. “Ẹ má ṣe pariwo,” ni ó sọ, ó fi ìka sí ẹnu rẹ̀. Ọmọbìnrin rẹ̀ fà á lẹ́sẹ̀kẹsẹ̀, ojú rẹ̀ kún fún omi-ọ̀pá.

Then came the roar, motorcycles tearing through the night, the echo of shouted orders, the crack of rifles. The chickens scattered. Miriam's youngest woke, crying. She grabbed him, motioning her daughter to stay quiet. The smell of smoke reached them, sharp and bitter. Somewhere, a woman screamed.

"God, have mercy," Miriam whispered.

She pushed open the back door, leading her children toward the yam barn behind the house. The barn had a pit underneath, an old hiding place from the days when raiders came for their farms. She told the children to climb in. "make no sound," she said, pressing a finger to her lips. Her daughter nodded, tears shining in her eyes.

From the front of the compound came the heavy stomp of boots. Miriam froze. Through the gaps in the wall she saw shapes moving, men in military clothes, guns glinting under the moonlight. Her body trembled, but she did not run.

A boy, he could not have been older than sixteen, stumbled into her yard, his leg bleeding. His gun hung loose at his side. He saw her, startled, and lifted it weakly.

"Please," he said in Hausa, his voice hoarse. "Water."

Miriam's heart pounded. She could hear the others shouting nearby. Logic screamed that she should hide, that she should protect her children. But something in her, the stubborn, inexplicable mercy that had guided Samuel's life, moved her feet. She fetched a calabash of water and knelt beside the boy.

"Drink," she said.

He hesitated, eyes wide. When he drank, some of the water spilled over his lips, darkening his torn shirt. "Why?" he asked.

She did not answer. She thought of the words of Jesus: If your enemy thirsts, give him drink.

THEN THE SHOUTING GREW CLOSER. Miriam grabbed the boy's arm and dragged him behind the yam heap. "Stay quiet," she whispered. "If they find you, you will die."

She ran back toward the pit where her children hid. The house was already burning, flames curling up like angry tongues. Heat singed her face. She tried to reach the pit, but the roof collapsed with a crack like thunder. She screamed their names, over and over, until her voice broke.

Later, she did not know how much later, the attackers left. The silence that followed was exhaustion. The village was a landscape of ruin: bodies scattered, smoke rising. Miriam stumbled through the ashes, calling for her children. She found them hours later, huddled under the pit's wooden lid, alive but trembling. She fell to her knees, tears cutting tracks through the soot on her face.

…pé àlàáfíà kì í ṣe pé ogun ò sí, ṣùgbọ́n pé àgbọ́ra jẹ́ láti dúró nígbà tí ilẹ̀ bá ń mí.

Láti ẹnu ilé, ìró bùùtì tí ń gbá ilẹ̀ bẹ̀rẹ̀. Miriam dúró bí òkúta. Nípasẹ̀ àfojúsùn tí ó wà láàrín ògiri tí ó ti bàjẹ́, ó rí àwọn ọkùnrin ń lọ, wọ́n wọ aṣọ ológun, ibọn wọn sì ń yọ ní ìmọ̀lẹ̀ osùpá. Ara rẹ̀ bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í gbóná bí ẹni tí omi tútù rà lóòru, ṣùgbọ́n kò sá.

Lọ́mọkùnrin kan, ó jù oní ọdún mẹ́rìndínlógún lọ, wá sá wọ̀lé sí ọgbà ilé rẹ̀, èsè rẹ̀ ń yọ èjè púpọ̀. Ibọn kan tó wà ní ọwọ́ rẹ̀ ro ní ọwọ́ rẹ̀. Ó rí Miriam, ó bẹ̀rù, ó sì gbìmọ́ láti gbé ibọn náà sókè, ṣùgbọ́n agbára kò sí nínú rẹ̀ mọ́.

"Jọ̀ọ́," ni ó sọ ní èdè Hausa, ohùn rẹ̀ gbígbẹ. "Omi."

Ọkàn Miriam bẹ̀rù gan-an. Ó lè gbọ́ àwọn mîì tí ń ké ní ìhà kejì. Ọkàn rẹ̀ àti ọpọlọ rẹ̀ ní ìjà—ọkàn rẹ̀ ní kí ó rán án lọ́wọ́, ọpọlọ rẹ̀ ní kí ó pamọ́ kí ó gba ọmọ rẹ̀ là. Ṣùgbọ́n ní inú rẹ̀, irú àánú tí kò jẹ́ kí Samuel ṣe ibi fún ẹnikẹ́ni, àánú tí kò mọ ìdí tí ó fi wà, ló gbé ẹsẹ̀ rẹ̀. Ó wọlé, ó mú agbe kan tí ó kún fún omi, ó sì bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í fọ́kàn-tán níwájú ọmọ ọdẹ náà.

"Mu," lo sọ.

Ó wo ó, ojú rẹ̀ kún fún ìyalẹ́nu àti ìbànújẹ̀. Nígbà tó mu, díẹ̀ nínú omi náà ṣàn sílẹ̀ sórí awo-orí rẹ̀ tí ó já. "Kí ló dé?" lo béèrè.

Ó kò dá a lóhùn. Ó rántí ọ̀rọ̀ Jesu: Bí ọ̀tá rẹ bá ní ongbẹ, fún un ní mimu.

Léyìn ìgbà díẹ̀, ariwo àwọn ọkùnrin náà tún sunmọ́ sí i. Miriam gbá ọmọkùnrin ológun náà mọ́ apá, ó sì fa a lọ séyìn ibi tí wọ́n ti pa isu. "Daké," lo sọ ní kíákíá. "Tí wọ́n bá rí ẹ, ìwọ á kú."

Ó padà sare sí ihò tí àwọn ọmọ rẹ̀ wà. Ilé náà ti bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í jó, iná ń yí orùlé ká bí ahun tí ń dákẹ́. Òórùn gbígbẹ iná gbá ojú rẹ̀. Ó gbìmọ̀ láti dé ihò náà, ṣùgbọ́n orùlé ilé náà ṣubù ní ariwo tí ó dà bí ìrìn orúndún ń fò. Ó ké orúkọ àwọn ọmọ rẹ̀, lẹ́ẹ̀kansi àti lẹ́ẹ̀kansi, títí tí ohùn rẹ̀ fi bàjẹ́.

Nígbà tí àwọn olùkọlù náà kúrò ní abúlé, ó ò mọ bí òru ṣe ti pẹ́ tó. Ìdákẹ́jẹ́ tí ó kọ́ lẹ́yìn wọn dà bí ẹni pé ẹ̀mí ń jópọ̀. Abúlé náà di ahoro tí iná ti jẹ, ara àwọn ènìyàn tán ká, ẹ̀fín ń gòkè bí ẹranko tí ó ti jẹ ọwọ́ òrò. Miriam ń rìn kiri, inú rẹ̀ kún fún ẹ̀dùn ọkàn, ó ń pe àwọn ọmọ rẹ̀ ní orúkọ. Nígbà tí ó wá wọn ní ìparí àkókò tó pé gan-an, wọ́n wà lábẹ́ àtẹ́lẹwọ́ ihò náà, wọ́n ń rẹ̀rìn-ín ní ìbànújẹ̀, wọ́n sì wà láàyè. Ó ṣubú sílẹ̀, ó kùn, ó sì jókòó ní ilẹ̀ pé ìbùkún Ọlọ́run kọ̀ ló ní jẹ́ kí ó parun.

BY MORNING, YELWATA WAS A GHOST. Survivors gathered in what remained of the church, a building stripped of its roof, the cross charred but still standing. Pastor Jacob's voice was hoarse as he prayed for the dead. The boy Miriam had hidden was there too; he had limped away before dawn but returned. He stood at the edge of the gathering, uncertain, ashamed.

When Pastor Jacob asked if anyone had seen the attackers closely, Miriam spoke. "One of them is here," she said, and heads turned sharply.

The boy fell to his knees, crying. "I am sorry," he said. "I did not want to kill. They forced us. I only wanted to live."

Anger rippled through the crowd. Someone shouted that he should be handed to the police; another said he should die. Pastor Jacob raised his hand. "Let God judge," he said quietly. "We will not become what we despise."

Miriam looked at the boy, saw in his face not a monster but a frightened child. She thought of her husband, of how easily hatred could rot the soul. She stepped forward, her hand shaking, and helped the boy to his feet. "You will work with us," she said. "You will help bury the dead."

The crowd murmured, some in disbelief, others in reluctant agreement. Pastor Jacob nodded. "This is how peace begins," he said.

For days they worked together, survivors and stranger. The boy helped dig graves; he mended roofs, fetched water. The villagers watched him warily, but slowly the edge of fear softened. On the fourth day, he stood beside Miriam as they rebuilt the church door. "My name is Faruk," he said quietly. "I never thought a Christian would save me."

She smiled faintly. "We serve a God who once saved His enemies too."

WEEKS LATER, JOURNALISTS ARRIVED. They asked questions, took pictures. They wanted Miriam to speak about forgiveness, about bravery. She said only that she had done what anyone should. But at night, when the village slept and only the crickets spoke, she sat outside the new church and wept, for her husband, for those lost, for the boy who had become a symbol of what mercy could do.

On Sunday, the first full service since the attack, Pastor Jacob read from Matthew: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God. He looked at Miriam as he said it. Outside, the fields still bore scars of fire, but green shoots were pushing through the ash.

When the congregation began to sing, Miriam's voice was clear this time, unbroken. The hymn rose

Ní òwúrọ̀, Yelwata dà bí abúlé tí a ti fi èmí rẹ̀ kúrò. Àwọn tí ó yè ní ìpànìyàn kó ara wọn jọ ní ohun tí ó kù nínú ṣọ́ọ̀ṣì—ilé tí a ti bọ orùlé rẹ̀, agbelebu aláwọ̀ dúdú tí iná ti jó, ṣùgbọ́n tí ó dúró ṣinṣin sí i.

Ohùn Pastor Jacob dùn bí ẹni tí omi tí gbígbóná ti bà a. Ó ń gbàdúrà fún àwọn tí ó kú, tí kòtò wọn kún abúlé bí òjiji tí ń tọ̀ lé iruju. Ọmọkùnrin tí Miriam ran lọ́wọ́ náà sì wà níbẹ̀; ó ti sá lọ ní wọ̀rọ̀wọ̀rọ̀ ní owurọ̀, ṣùgbọ́n ó padà wá nígbà tí òru parí. Ó dúró ní etí àpẹẹrẹ àwọn ẹlẹ́gbẹ́ náà, ojú rẹ̀ kún fún ìtìjú àti ìyọnú.

Nígbà tí Pastor Jacob béèrè bóyá ẹnikẹ́ni ti rí ojú àwọn olùkọlù náà dáadáa, Miriam dákẹ́ fún ìgbà díẹ̀. Lẹ́yìn náà, ó sọ wá. "Ọkan nínú wọn wà níbí," ni ó wí, ó sì tọ́ka.

Gbogbo ojú wọ sí ọ̀dọ̀ ọmọdé náà. Ó ṣubú lulẹ̀, ó sì bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í sunkún láti inú ọkàn rẹ̀. "Ẹ jọ̀ọ́ ẹ gbà mí," ni ó wí, "Èmi kò fẹ́ pa ẹnikẹ́ni. Wọ́n fi wa ṣe ẹrú. Mo kan fẹ́ kí n yè."

Ìbínú gbòòrò bí omi tí a ti sọ̀ kalẹ̀. Ọkùnrin kan ké pé kí wọ́n fi ọmọ náà fún ọlọ́pàá; ẹlòmíràn ní kí wọ́n pa á níbí ní báyìí. Pastor Jacob rọrùn fawọ́ rẹ̀ sókè, ó sì sọ ní ìmọ̀tara-ẹni-nìkan tó dùn sílẹ̀. "Ẹ jẹ́ kí Ọlọ́run ṣe ìdájọ́," ni ó sọ. "A kì í di ohun tí a kọ̀ láti jẹ́."

Miriam wo ọmọdé náà, ó sì rí i pé kì í ṣe ẹranko tí a gbèbùn, ṣùgbọ́n ọmọ tí ìbànújẹ̀ ti bà jẹ gan-an. Ó rántí ọkọ rẹ̀ Samuel, àti bí ìbànújẹ̀ ọkàn ṣe lè pa èmí ènìyàn ní jajá. Ó sun mọ́ ọmọdé náà, ọwọ́ rẹ̀ ń mì bí ẹyẹ tí omi ti fò lórí rẹ̀, ó sì gbé e soke. "Ìwọ yóò ṣiṣẹ́ pẹ̀lú wa," ni ó sọ. "Ìwọ yóò ràn wa lọ́wọ́ láti sin àwọn tí a ti pàdánù."

Àwọn ènìyàn yí ká, díẹ̀ nínú wọn ń yá, ẹlòmíràn ń fọ̀rọ̀ sọ̀rọ̀ lọ́kọ̀ọ̀kan. Pastor Jacob rọ̀ọ̀rọ̀ tẹ̀síwájú. "Èyí ni ibẹ̀rẹ̀ àlàáfíà."

Ọjọ́ mélòó kan ní wọn ti ṣiṣẹ́ pọ̀, àwọn tí ó yè àti ọmọkùnrin tí kò mọ ibi tí a ti rán an sí. Ó ràn wọ́n lọ́wọ́ láti wà kòtò, ó tún àwo ilé ṣe, ó sì bá àwọn obìnrin mu omi. Àwọn ará abúlé ń wo ọ́ ní ìbànújẹ̀ àti ìfojúsùn, ṣùgbọ́n díẹ̀díẹ̀, ìbẹ̀rù bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í rọ. Ní ọjọ́ kẹrin, ó dúró lẹ́gbẹ̀ẹ́ Miriam nígbà tí wọ́n ń tún ilẹ̀kùn ṣọ́ọ̀ṣì ṣe. "Orúkọ mi ni Faruk," ni ó sọ ní ríré. "Èmi kò rò pé Kristẹni kan yóò gba mí là."

Miriam rẹ́rìn-ín ní ìmọ̀lára tí ó dọ́jú-kúrò ní ìbànújẹ̀. "A sin Ọlọ́run tí ó gba ọ̀tá Rẹ̀ là nígbà kan."

Lẹ́yìn ọ̀sẹ̀ díẹ̀, àwọn oníròyìn dé. Wọ́n bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í bi ìbéèrè, wọ́n ya fọ́tò, wọ́n sì fẹ́ kí Míríámù sọ nípa ìdárìjì àti akíkanjú. Ó sọ pé kò ṣe mîì ju ohun tí ẹnikẹ́ni tó ní ọkàn rere yẹ kí ó ṣe. Ṣùgbọ́n ní òru, nígbà tí abúlé balẹ̀, tí kò sí ohun tí a gbọ́ bí ìró aláwọ̀n, ó jókòó níwájú ṣọ́ọ̀ṣì tuntun náà, ó sì sunkún—fún ọkọ rẹ̀, fún àwọn tí a pà, àti fún ọmọkùnrin yẹn tí ó ti di àpẹẹrẹ ohun tí àánú lè ṣe.



Beatz / Pexels

"We will not become what we despise."

above the ruins, above the memory of gunfire, a fragile melody defying the night.

As the sun climbed higher, Yelwata seemed almost reborn, its wounds raw but alive. And though the world beyond the village still raged with violence, Miriam knew that peace, the stubborn kind that clings to faith in darkness, had found a home here, one that no flame could destroy. ◆

*Author's note:* This story is adapted loosely from the real events of the massacre of Christians in Yelwata, Benue State, Nigeria, in June 2025, in which 280 Christians were reportedly killed by Fulani militia. It is also written to shine light on the rising killings of Christians in Nigeria, both to raise awareness and to call for prayers and support for the rehabilitation of survivors.

**Israel Elazar** (dipersb@gmail.com) is a Christian from Nigeria who is passionate about reflecting the love of Christ to the world. He is an evangelist, youth counsellor, Bible commentator, and researcher. He has been involved in secondary school evangelical outreaches for over a decade.

Ní Ọjọ́ Àìkú, ní ìṣẹ́ Ìjọsìn àkọ́kọ́ tí ó pé patapata láti ìgbà tí ikọlù ṣẹlẹ̀, Pásítọ̀ Jẹ́kọ́bù ka ìwé Mátíù pé: "Aláàánú ni àwọn tí ń dá aláfíà sílẹ̀; wọn ni a ó pè ní ọmọ Ọlọ́run." Nígbà tó ń ka a, ó wo Míríámù. Níta, àwọn oko ṣì ní àmì iná lórí, ṣùgbọ́n àwọn ewé tuntun ti bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í jáyé ní kùuru eeru.

Nígbà tí ìjọ bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í kọ orin, ohùn Míríámù mọ́, kò sì ya nígbà yìí. Òkè-orin náà gòkè lókè rúìn, gòkè lókè ìrántí ibọn, gẹ́gẹ́ bí orin ẹ́rẹ́ tí ń kọ́ọ́ sí òru.

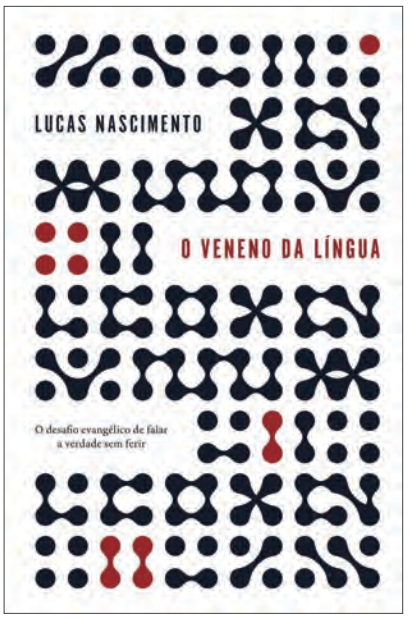
Nígbà tí oorun bẹ̀rẹ̀ sí í gòkè sórí òrun, Yélúwátà dà bí ẹni pé a tún bí i, àwọn ọgbẹ́ rẹ̀ ṣì tún tútù, ṣùgbọ́n ó wà láàyè. Ìgbà tí ayé níta abúlé bá a lè ń jo ní iwa-ipa, Míríámù mọ̀ pé àlàáfíà—èyà tí ó ń jóko ní okùnkùn tí ó sì kọ̀ láti kú—ti rí ilé níbí, ilé tí kò sí iná tí yóò lè pa a run. ◆

*Àkọsílẹ̀ Ìtẹ̀síwájú*: Ìtàn yìí jẹ́ ayípadà kékèké lára ohun tí òtítọ́ gan-an ṣẹlẹ̀ nípa ìpànìyàn àwọn onígbàgbọ́ ní Yélúwátà, Ìpínlẹ̀ Bẹ̀nwé, ní Oṣù Karùn-ún ọdún 2025, níbi tí a ti kà pé Fulani ọkòwé-ogun pa díẹ̀díẹ̀ tó lé ní 280 Kristẹni. A tún kọ ọ láti fi ìmọ̀lẹ̀ ṣe lórí búburú tí ó ń gòkè nípa pípani àwọn Kristẹni ní Nàìjíríà, láti jí ìmọ̀ràn, kí ó sì pè ní adúrà àti ìrànlọ́wọ́ fún àwọn tí ó yè.

Títí di ọjọ́ kàrùn-ún, Oṣù Kẹwàá ọdún 2025, àwọn ẹ̀rí tí a lè gbẹ́kẹ̀ lé fi hàn pé a ti pa díẹ̀díẹ̀ tó lé ní 7,087 Kristẹni láàrín Oṣù Kini sí Oṣù Kẹjọ ọdún 2025.

**Israel Elazar** (dipersb@gmail.com) jẹ́ Kristẹni ará Nàìjíríà tí ó nífẹ́ẹ́ gan-an sí fífi ìfẹ́ Kristi hàn sí ayé. Ó jẹ́ oníhìn-èrò, olùkọ́ni àwọn ọdọ́, aṣàfihàn Bíbélì, àti olùwádìí. Ó ti kópa ní ìṣẹ́ ihìn rere ní ilé-ẹ̀kọ́ girama fún ọdún púpọ̀.

*Jointly translated and proofread with Grace Ibukun.*



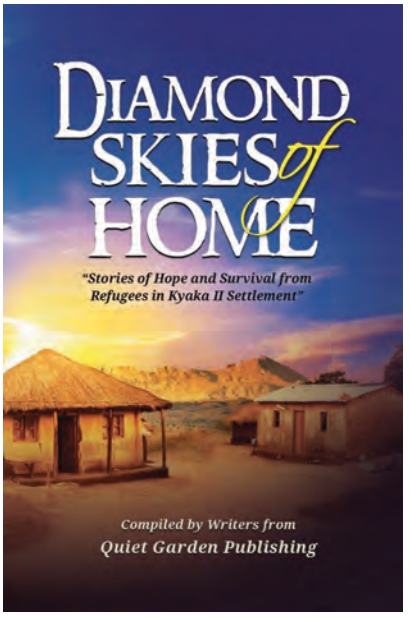

## O VENENO DA LÍNGUA: O DESAFIO EVANGÉLICO DE FALAR A VERDADE SEM FERIR

*("THE POISON OF THE TONGUE: THE EVANGELICAL CHALLENGE OF SPEAKING TRUTH WITHOUT HARM")*

LUCAS NASCIMENTO
Christian Living
Mundo Cristão (Brazil), 2025
160 pages (Print and Digital)
Portuguese

In recent years, aggressive words have marked a significant portion of Christian discourse. God's Word offers a serious warning, "And so blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, this is not right!" (James 3:10). This book explores how our words have the power to build bridges or start fires. Lucas invites us to communicate wisely, reflecting the essence of the gospel as we speak on the crucial issues of our time.

Available for purchase and shipment from Amazon in various countries.




## DIAMOND SKIES OF HOME

VARIOUS
Anthology of Short Stories
Quiet Garden Publishing (Uganda) 2018
164 pages (Print)
English

In this collection, refugees tell of life in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), gripped by crippling poverty and a relentless cyclical history of violence. Many have been compelled to leave their cherished homes and settle in the confines of a refugee camp. Yet these stories reveal that the light of God still shines bright in the midst of darkness—and that after every storm, the sun will rise again to bring joy and healing.

Available for purchase direct from Quiet Garden Publishers:
quietgardenpublishers.com, quietgardenug@gmail.com
Ships from Uganda.

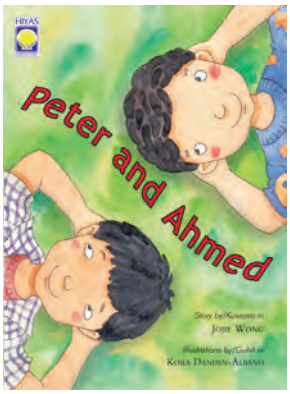



## MY WAR STORY

VARIOUS
Anthology of Short Stories
Mission Eurasia (USA), 2023
210 pages (Print)
English

Ukrainian pastor and author Serhii Solohub initiated a short story writing competition in which Christians shared personal experiences from the onset of the current war between Russia and Ukraine. This anthology features stories of life and hope in the face of despair and death—and ultimately of profound faith in God's presence and victory.

Available on request directly from Mission Eurasia. Contact info@missioneurasia.org to enquire about receiving a copy.
Ships from the US.




## PETER AND AHMED

JOJIE WONG (Author) and KORA DANDAN-ALBANO (Illustrator)
Children's Picture Book
OMF Literature (Philippines), 2014
34 pages (Print)
English and Tagalog

A bilingual Tagalog and English story on friendship between children of different faith, in places where it might least be expected. When a family moves to Peter's neighborhood, Peter hears his neighbors saying that they are bad people since they are Muslims. Peter feels sad, and hopes he can be friends with the new boy. Peter and Ahmed's experiences invite readers to consider just how Muslims and Christians might be friends.

Available for purchase from the OMFLit online shop:
https://shop.omflit.com/products/peter-and-ahmed
Ships from the Philippines.




## ITMENAAM KI TALASH

*("IN SEARCH OF PEACE")*

JORDAN C. KHAN (Author) and CYRIL SINGH (Translator)
Christian Living
MIK (Pakistan), 2023
64 pages (Print)
Urdu

An evangelistic booklet consisting of 64 pages in Urdu, "In Search of Peace" has already been printed 13 times at the time of writing. It outlines the greatest obstacles on our path to attaining the peace we all seek—and an invitation to find true peace. True peace, readers discover, is only to be found in Jesus. The life of Christ is the central focus, and stories from everyday life help us to connect with its invitation to faith.

Available for purchase from MIK:
mik.org.pk/product/itminam-ki-talash/, christian.publisher@mik.org.pk
Ships from Pakistan.

# Khan Younis, the Wind Remembers

Aaron Lee



*Lord, You will establish peace for us,*
*For You have also done all our works in us.*
*– Isaiah 26:12*

In the time-trampled ruin of my church I hear stones whisper,
each voice and syllable a splinter in my wrinkled hands
cradling the names of lost loved ones, ribboned from sky
to smoking earth to sky again. A garden of rubble has risen
where our prayers once braided light into the air, its petals
ashen in eventide. Yet in the bomb-shattered shards I find
a promise that will not die: *He wore a crown of thorns*
*for those who cursed his name, and loved us still unto the grave.*
These days I have watched eyes that would not close
behold horrors and still offer bread; I have seen a new-freed
prisoner taste rain and pass that sweetness on to a child.
These days I have become the echo, not the voice. So, I keep
hope like a lamp, lay next to these broken stones in the night
and hear the wind weep in the sycamore fig trees: *Shalom. Shalom.*



**Aaron Lee** is a Singapore-based cultural worker and pilgrim poet. He has authored three poetry collections and is the co-editor of several anthologies of creative writing. His work is published internationally, and he has led workshops and appeared at festivals worldwide. He serves as missions pastor at his home church, chairs the MAI-Asia regional board, and co-founded Laniakea Cultural Collective (laniakea.la) with his artist wife, Namiko Chan Takahashi.




Istanbul, Turkey – Miras Publishing Ministries co-founder Gökhan Talas talks with a worker at one of the few Christian bookstores in Turkey.

Photo by Heather Pubols

# The Presence of Christ



Heather Pubols
*MAI President*

As you come to the end of this first edition of *Bread & Ink*, I hope you are carrying more than just the words on these pages. I hope you are carrying the voices: voices shaped in places of tension, loss, courage, and faith.

These are not distant stories. They are testimonies from brothers and sisters who are living out the call of Christ in distinctly challenging circumstances. Yet their witness draws us back to something central and unchanging: only God can give us true peace.

Again and again throughout this edition, we see that peace is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of Christ. It is formed in the courage to love enemies, in the costly choice to extend mercy when it would be easier to withdraw or retaliate, and in the quiet discipline of forgiveness. This peace holds steady even when the world feels unsteady.

You have read stories of resilience in Pakistan, quiet courage in Turkey, perseverance in Ukraine, and mercy in Nigeria. You have seen how the written word continues to carry hope across boundaries, and how it deeply connects the global Church, even across distance and difficulty.

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read. Where has something stirred your heart? Where have you been challenged? Where might God be inviting you to respond?

Perhaps that response begins in prayer: for the writers, for their communities, and for the ongoing work of Christian publishing in places where it is costly. Perhaps it is a renewed commitment to be a person of peace in the context where God has placed you.

We are part of one body. When one part suffers, we all share in that suffering. And when one part bears witness to Christ with courage and faith, we are all strengthened.

Thank you for reading, for reflecting, and for standing with these writers.



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