

# 'REACH OUT!'

Writing letters or cards of encouragement  
to Christians imprisoned for their faith.

**release**

 **INTERNATIONAL**  
voice of persecuted christians



'WHEN A CHRISTIAN GOES TO PRISON...  
THE FAMILY SUFFERS ENDLESSLY.'

*Richard Wurmbrand's prisoner profiles.*



# REACH OUT!

Today many Christians are in prison, suffering because they love and follow Jesus Christ in countries where it can be dangerous to do so. They may have been locked up for taking part in evangelism, or simply for owning a Bible. These men and women who are enduring great hardship, even torture, are part of our spiritual family; as such we have a responsibility towards them and we are encouraged in scripture to remember them:

**'REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON AS IF YOU WERE THEIR FELLOW PRISONERS, AND THOSE WHO ARE ILL-TREATED AS IF YOU YOURSELVES WERE SUFFERING.'**

*Hebrews 13:3*

The inspiration for Release International's ministry came from the prison cell through the persecution, and ministry, of Pastor Richard Wurmbrand, who was imprisoned for his faith in Christ for a total of 14 years in communist Romania in the 1950s and 1960s.

One of Release's five key purposes is to share God's love: by reaching out and writing letters or cards of encouragement you are fulfilling this aim. Encouragement is described in scripture as a gift from God (Romans 12:4-8) and there are many passages in the Bible about encouraging others.

*'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.'*

*1 Thessalonians 5:11*

This resource gives you information about writing letters or cards of encouragement to prisoners of faith and their families and also to other persecuted Christians, some of whom may be former prisoners. However, it is also possible to write to the authorities on behalf of Christian prisoners of faith. Guidance on how to do this is found in the companion brochure, *'Speak Out!'*

# WRITING LETTERS AND CARDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

One way in which we can reach out to our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world is by writing them a letter or card of encouragement. This may be to a specific Christian, perhaps one who is imprisoned for their faith, to their family, or to a persecuted Christian who has been profiled in one of our publications. Alternatively it may be more generally to any brother or sister in Christ in a country where there is persecution against Christians.

You may wonder if your letters or cards will make any difference to a persecuted Christian in a country many miles away, especially if they are not even written in their native language. When we put this question to the daughter of a Chinese pastor who was imprisoned for four years for printing Bibles she said, 'One drop of rain doesn't make any difference, but all together they make a storm.'

So be encouraged! Your letters and cards, along with many others, can and do make a world of

difference to persecuted Christians as proof to them – and the authorities – that they are not forgotten. Letters and cards to prisoners are often a strong witness to those who open them to censor them. Lonely, isolated prisoners are often tormented by guards who tell them that no one knows about their suffering, and their faith comes under great pressure. Receiving a letter or card from someone is a practical demonstration of love and helps to keep their faith strong.



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# CHRISTIANS WHO NEED YOU TO 'REACH OUT!'

Profiles of prisoners of faith, including information about their families and the addresses to write to, can be found at [www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners](http://www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners). Or call our Supporter Relations Team on 01689 823491 to ask for up to six Profiles to be posted to you.

**Please remember: information about a prisoner can change; Profiles on the website are updated when new information is received but if you have printed off the Profiles or several weeks have elapsed between receiving the Profiles in the post and using them, please check that you are using the latest available information. Not doing so may put prisoners and their families at risk.**

Or you may wish to write more general letters or cards of encouragement to any brother or sister in Christ in a country where there is persecution against Christians.



**'I FELT GOD'S LOVE THROUGH THOSE LETTERS...THEY BRING THE HOPE OF HEAVEN TO OUR HOME...THIS IS GOD'S LOVE.'**

*Pastor Shi, pictured above with his family.*





Cards of encouragement being received by the widow of a prisoner of faith who died in prison.



A card of encouragement to an Eritrean Christian in a refugee camp.

'IT IS SUCH A PRIVILEGE TO SEND ON THESE LETTERS AND CARDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRISONERS AND THEIR FAMILIES BECAUSE THEY ARE SENT WITH THE LOVE AND PRAYERS OF SO MANY CHRISTIANS HERE IN THE UK AND IRELAND.' *Release's Prisoners of Faith manager*

'WE HEARD FROM OUR  
GUARDS THAT FORTY  
TO FIFTY LETTERS  
WERE COMING EACH  
DAY...THIS WAS  
SOMETHING THAT GAVE  
US HOPE.'

*Former Iranian prisoner  
of faith Maryam  
Rostampour  
(pictured left).*



'...THE GUARDS WHO OPENED OUR LETTERS READ  
THE BIBLE VERSES AND WERE IMPACTED...THEY  
TOLD US AND MENTIONED SOME OF THE VERSES  
FROM THE GOSPEL.'

*Former Iranian prisoner of faith Marziyeh Amirizadeh.*

# THINGS TO DO AND NOT TO DO!

## Do:

- ✓ Check that you have the latest available information if you are writing to a specific prisoner. See the information on page 5 about Profiles.
- ✓ Write legibly so that your letter or card can be translated if necessary.
- ✓ Write letters, postcards, Christian greeting cards or even bookmarks.
- ✓ Pray for the person who will receive your encouragement as you write.
- ✓ Tell them that they are not forgotten and that they are loved.
- ✓ Keep it short.
- ✓ Quote a Bible verse, and give the reference. Some useful verses are included opposite.
- ✓ Be polite and respectful.

- ✓ Sign it with just your first name and the country you are from.
- ✓ If you are under 16, check your letter or card with a Christian parent or church/youth leader.
- ✓ Address your envelope by hand as a printed label can look too official.

## Do not:

- ✗ Use out-of-date information.
- ✗ Mention Release International or your source of information – this could jeopardise the safety of the person you are trying to encourage, their family or people campaigning on their behalf.
- ✗ Write about politics or criticise governments or the authorities.
- ✗ Highlight how different your situation is to their own situation.
- ✗ Give your full name or any contact details.
- ✗ Send any money with your letter or card.



# USEFUL SCRIPTURE VERSES

These are just a few scripture references which you may find it helpful to use but there are many others.

JOB 36: 15

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MATTHEW 5: 43-45

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JOHN 15: 18-20

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ROMANS 5: 2-5

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ROMANS 8: 18

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PHILIPPIANS 1: 29-30

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2 TIMOTHY 3: 12-14

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HEBREWS 13: 3

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1 PETER 5: 10-11

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REVELATION 2: 10

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# WHAT NEXT?

Prayerfully consider if you want to use your gift of encouragement to reach out to others and decide who you would like to write to. Profiles of prisoners of faith, including information about their families and relevant addresses to write to, can be found at [www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners](http://www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners) or telephone our Supporter Relations Team on 01689 823491 to request up to six Profiles to be posted to you.

**Please remember: information about a prisoner can change; Profiles on the website are updated when new information is received but if you have printed off the Profiles or several weeks have elapsed since receiving the Profiles in the post and using them, please check that you are using the latest available information. Not doing so may put prisoners and their families at risk.**

Address the envelope by hand (as printed labels can look too official and draw unwanted attention); mark it 'AIRMAIL' and check the correct postage. If you want to send more general letters or cards to an unnamed brother or sister in Christ please put the letters or cards in unsealed envelopes, addressed to 'brother/sister in Christ', add the name of a country if you wish to and send the individual envelopes in another envelope addressed to Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington BR5 4RT.

# HELP PRISONERS OF FAITH TODAY

By giving a monthly sum, you can make a real difference to Christians imprisoned for their faith, and their families. Please be as generous as you can; even £5 a month makes a difference and helps to provide:

- pastoral visits to those in prison, and to their families, so they know they have not been forgotten
- practical help for families who have been deprived of their breadwinner – and to help to pay the cost of prison visits
- legal and other assistance

To find out more, please call us on 01689 823491 or visit [www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners](http://www.releaseinternational.org/prisoners) where you can download a flier that includes a Standing Order form.



## OTHER INFORMATION

Release produces a free monthly email, the *Prisoners of Faith* alert, which gives details of an individual Christian prisoner with their Profile as an attachment. This can be downloaded and printed, and includes specific prayer points and letter-writing information.

Please call our Supporter Relations Team on 01689 823491 or email [info@releaseinternational.org](mailto:info@releaseinternational.org) to receive your monthly Prisoners of Faith alert.

# THANK YOU

Thank you for considering how you can 'Reach Out!'. As you take the next step and use the Profiles to write to prisoners, their families or to any persecuted Christian, we pray that you will know God's blessing in this vital ministry. If you need further guidance or advice on how to reach out, or if you would like to know how you can get more involved in Release International, please contact us on 01689 823491 or [info@releaseinternational.org](mailto:info@releaseinternational.org).

**'I AM HERE WITH  
JESUS CHRIST AND  
WE SUFFER AND  
REJOICE TOGETHER.'**

*Pastor Zaur Balaev (right)  
pictured being embraced  
after his release from jail  
in Azerbaijan.*



**'MY FELLOW PRISONERS ARE ALWAYS IN MY  
MIND AND IN MY HEART, I CRY FOR THEM  
EVERY DAY, FOR I KNOW THE SITUATION I  
LEFT THEM IN. PLEASE CARRY ON PRAYING  
FOR THEM JUST LIKE YOU DID FOR ME; THAT  
WAY MY JOY WOULD BE COMPLETE.'**

*Former Eritrean prisoner of faith Helen Berhane.*



[www.releaseinternational.org](http://www.releaseinternational.org)

Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington BR5 4RT  
Tel: 01689 823491 Email: [info@releaseinternational.org](mailto:info@releaseinternational.org)

Registered Charity 280577

All personal data/sensitive personal data herein are processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.  
Further details are available from Release International.

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