



Use these notes with the PowerPoint presentation at www.opendoorsyouth.org/appeal to speak to tell your church or youth group about what is happening to Christians from Iraq and Syria. Adapt the presentation as you see fit!



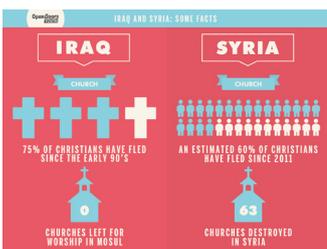
Introduce yourself and explain that the next few minutes will be spent talking about the situation in Iraq and Syria. There's some facts, real life stories and importantly, ways we can respond and stand with our persecuted family.



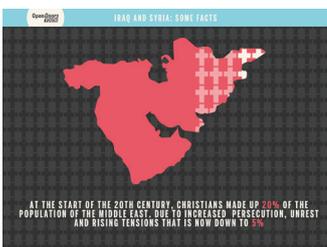
Explain the info graphics. The left hand side relates to Iraq, whereas the right hand side is about Syria. Iraq has been in a state of unrest and turmoil since the early 1990s, whereas the civil war in Syria began in 2011. Since that time, unrest in both countries has created a massive crisis. We know from watching the news that millions have left both of these countries, but there are nearly around 8.5 million people displaced within the countries themselves. Just last year, there were over 17,000 civilian deaths in each country.



Explain the info graphics. Shockingly everyday last year 32,000 people became refugees from these countries. 50% of these people are children.



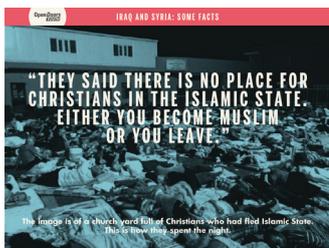
Explain the info graphics. These statistics are specifically about the Church in both countries. In Iraq, political turmoil since the 90s has seen increasing persecution against Christians. Up to 75% of the Christian community has left since that time. In Syria, Christians have been caught in the middle of a harsh civil war, accused of supporting the government by militants and not seen as a priority by Syrian troops. An estimated 60% of Christians have fled. In both countries the rise of extremist Islamic factions, like IS, has seen Christians specifically targeted. In Mosul, Iraq, there are no churches left for worship to Jesus. In Syria 63 churches have been destroyed since the start of the conflict.



This summary statistic speaks for itself. Read it out.



This is the Arabic symbol for the letter 'N'. It's shorthand for the word Nazarene or Christian. As IS militants took over Mosul in Iraq in August 2014, this symbol was drawn on Christian homes and businesses, identifying the whereabouts of their targets. Christians were given an ultimatum; leave, convert to the extreme form of Islam espoused by IS, pay a hefty fine or die. Most Christians left. Since then, this symbol has been used by Christians around the world as a way of standing with followers of Jesus in Iraq and Syria.



This is a quote from a Christian who fled IS.

The image behind is from last August. It shows families that fled the Ninevah plains (a Christian area) when IS approached. They found refuge in the grounds of a church in the city of Erbil.



This is a Christian couple, Ayda and Khada, with a picture of their four year old daughter Christine. They were forced to leave Qaraqoush, their town in the Ninevah plains after IS had taken over. As they left, an IS soldier took Christine. Ayda begged that her daughter be returned to her, but was threatened at gunpoint. She was forced onto a bus and driven away. That was August 2014. Ayda and Khada haven't seen their daughter since, and have had no news of her either.

The full story is here if you want to elaborate: www.opendoorsyouth.org/news/prayer/still-missing/

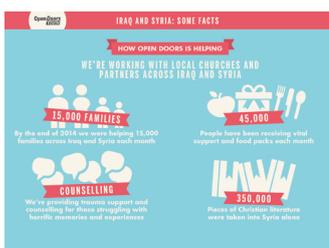


This is an image of a Christian neighbourhood in Homs, Syria. The building is actually a hospital that has been targeted and bombed around 20 times. The war is tearing apart communities, destroying homes and causing most to flee.



Show the film....

The video here is linked to YouTube, so will need an internet connection to work
You can insert the film here if not playing (download at www.opendoorsyouth.org/appeal)
You can also view the film at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tSnj_tx__Y



It isn't all hopeless. Through a network of churches and partners on the ground Open Doors have been helping. In fact we've been working with Christians in the region for over 20 years. By the end of last year Open Doors was helping 15,000 families a month. That meant in excess of 45,000 people depending on our food and relief packs. That number has now grown. We're also delivering Bibles and Christian materials as well as supporting church leaders, offering counselling and training, and helping those who have been displaced learn new languages to enable them find work in places where they might not speak the local language.



This is Daniel. He is a church leader in training. He works for a church in Erbil, Northern Iraq. In August 2014 the grounds of the church were, overnight, turned into a makeshift refugee camp for hundreds of families fleeing Islamic State from towns on the Ninevah plains. Many families are still there. Daniel, with support from Open Doors, is helping to look after the children in the camp, helping with lessons, activities, games and counselling.



Spend some time reading through the prayer points. Elaborate on the points and give space for people to pray their own prayers. You might want to pray specifically for some of the people from the video, like Douglas, or those mentioned in the slides, like Daniel, Ayda and Khada and their daughter Christine.



Talk about how people can give to support their family in Iraq and Syria.

The details on the slide highlight that just a £4 gift via text can make a difference, but a bigger gift of £35.50 can send an emergency food parcel full of supplies that will help a family of five for two weeks. If people want to give more they can replace the £4 in the text with a different amount. If you're taking up an offering then ask people to give as collection baskets/plates are passed around.

People can also give online at www.opendoorsyouth.org/give



Read out the info on the slide to explain how people can use their voice to encourage our government to do all they can to ensure Christians can stay safely in the Middle East.

Sign the letter at www.opendoorsyouth.org/signthis



End with a massive thank you on behalf of persecuted Christians in Iraq and Syria.