



Christian Freedom[®] International

*“Lilly’s” Story:
Combating Persecution
With Love. . .*



The Persecution that Women Face:

Persecutors are inhumane against Christians. They maim, kill, destroy homes, businesses, and churches . . . and kidnap women and girls to tear apart families and communities.

That is what happened to “Lilly”. *

Boko Haram in Nigeria invaded her village, massacred her brothers, and abducted “Lilly” [not her real name]. They held her captive in their forest headquarters and planned to force her – a Christian wife and mother – to marry an Islamist soldier.

When “Lilly” escaped from Boko Haram to return home a year later, she was not coming back alone. She was carrying a baby.

Would her husband – and the village – accept “Lilly” after she was raped by terrorists? And, even more difficult, would they accept her baby, the child of an enemy?

The wise chief of “Lilly’s” village counseled her husband through the pain. He led the villagers to embrace her and her child – to welcome them with love, not reject them with hate.

They understand that jihadists seek to steal, kill, and destroy Christians. Tearing apart families is a vicious tactic meant to obliterate Christian communities.

CHRISTIANITY IS DIFFERENT.

The villagers chose to overcome persecution with the power of God’s love — through healing and restoration.

After her return, “Lilly’s” community bought land to build a new village in a safer area.

As a gift for the community to begin anew, Christian Freedom International provided seeds – an investment that ties the community together as they work to rebuild their lives.

** Refer to Cover Letter for “Lilly’s” full story.*



Since then – with your support – we have provided for other survivors of militants who are intent on wiping out Christians in Nigeria.

Over the past decade, violent attacks by murderous Islamists left many women as widows to fend for themselves and their children. In February, thirty widows were trained and equipped to provide for their families by starting their own businesses.

THESE ARE JUST SOME OF THEIR STORIES: **

“Joy” is the mother of seven children. She was widowed when her husband was attacked and killed by Fulani herdsmen on his way back home from an evening outing after the day’s farm work.

“Beth” is the mother of four children — the youngest just two years old. She was widowed when her husband was attacked and killed by Fulani men in March of 2019 when he was riding home from work.



Photo by Stefanos Foundation

“Hope” is a mother of six. Just last April, Fulani men attacked her village and started shooting. As she and her family and other villagers were running to take refuge, eleven people were killed including her husband, mother in law and grandson. Their houses were burnt down as well.

**** Names changed to protect the identities of these women.**



These women learned about savings plans, the need for budgeting in running a business, and how to open bank accounts and access loans and grants. The day began with prayer and an exhortation emphasizing hard work and faith in God.

Then they were given “seed” funding to encourage their new ventures. The ladies expressed profound gratitude and asked God to bless the efforts.

In these ways, together we are helping Christian women and families weather the losses of persecution – and build new lives for their families.

*Have a Blessed Mother's Day,
and please remember to pray for healing and protection
over these precious mothers and their families.*

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ARE FINISHED READING IT.**

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Christian Freedom[®]

International

May 2021



Dear Friend of the Persecuted Church,

Would you read this letter when you have a quiet moment to ponder and pray over this sensitive topic?

When I speak to groups about it, a hush descends on the room. People's heads bow as they wonder, "what would I do if it happened to someone in my family?"

It is a topic that you have heard something about. But you may not know the far-reaching effects of persecution tactics used against women – and how they impact men and whole communities.

Persecutors are inhumane. They maim, kill, destroy homes, businesses, and churches . . . and kidnap women and girls to tear apart families and communities.

That is what happened to "Lilly".

Boko Haram in Nigeria invaded her village, massacred her brothers, and abducted "Lilly" [not her real name]. They held her captive in their forest headquarters and planned to force her – a Christian wife and mother – to marry an Islamist soldier.

"Lilly" escaped from Boko Haram a year later.

By this time, her village – those who survived the attack – had fled to a safer part of Nigeria. The displaced villagers found refuge in a friendly community and are rebuilding their lives.

"Lilly" called her husband and found her way to their camp.

But before she arrived and was reunited with her family,

the village chief met with her husband.

The chief knew something – and knew that he needed to prepare “Lilly’s” husband.

“Lilly” was not coming back alone. She was carrying a baby.

Would her husband – and the village – accept “Lilly” after she was raped by terrorists? And, even more difficult, would they accept her baby, the child of an enemy?

Would you take a moment to think about that?

A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Persecution comes in many ways, such as violence and imprisonment.

Persecutors also use tactics that strike at the core of men as *providers* and *protectors* of their families and communities.

They strike at the core of women – as females, wives, and mothers – through sexual violence, trafficking, forced marriages, and selling as “brides”. *(Please pray for these captive women – that God will rescue, restore, and strengthen their identity in Christ.)*

In some cultures, when a woman is sexually violated, she is shamed, tarnished, not marriageable, and “dishonored”. Kidnapping and forced marriages – by design – are intended to forcibly convert women and their subsequent children. It undermines Christian families, decreases the Christian population, and deprives Christian women of a healthy family life as she is locked into a “living death”.

In some cultures, no child of a foreign, or unknown, father will be accepted into their community. And certainly not the child of an “enemy”.

Militants like Boko Haram invade villages and invade families to dominate and overtake them. They violate women to subjugate as slaves, damage men’s God-given identity as protector, and destroy the fabric of the community.

If a Christian woman escapes her persecutors, can she – and her child or children – ever be accepted? Can she and her child ever belong to a community?

COMBATING PERSECUTION WITH LOVE

The wise chief of "Lilly's" village counseled her husband through the pain. He led the villagers to embrace her and her child – to welcome them with love, not reject them with hate.

They understand that jihadists seek to steal, kill, and destroy Christians. Tearing apart families is a vicious tactic meant to obliterate Christian communities.

Christianity is different. By welcoming "Lilly" and her child, the wise chief and villagers refused to fall prey to the persecutors' tactics. They sought healing and restoration.

Christians remember that Joseph welcomed Mary, pregnant by a mysterious father, and he raised her son Jesus. Jesus likely carried the stigma of an "illegitimate" child. He deflected snide remarks about His parentage even as an adult (see John 8:41).

The villagers chose to overcome persecution with the power of God's love. They blunted the terrorists' invasions of their land, families, and community by strengthening their commitment to one another and starting anew.

They flip the terrorists' script. Christian men embrace their adopted children and provide and protect their now-larger family. Women are welcomed back.

This is not easy. New challenges arise. Men, women and children are traumatized. Clans deal with issues like inheritances. *Please pray for wisdom and a spirit of lovingkindness toward one another.*

A NEW BEGINNING

After her return, "Lilly's" community bought land to build a new village in a safer area. When I visited, they had cleared the trees and would soon plant crops. Once the crops produce an income, they would build homes.

As a gift for the community to begin anew, Christian Freedom International provided seeds – an investment that ties the community together as they rebuild their lives.

Since then – *with your support* – we have provided for other survivors of militants who are intent on wiping out Christians in Nigeria.

Over the past decade, violent attacks by murderous Islamists left many women as widows to fend for themselves and their children. In February, thirty widows were trained and equipped to provide for their families by starting their own businesses.

The women learned about savings plans, the need for budgeting in running a business, and how to open bank accounts and access loans and grants. The day began with prayer and an exhortation emphasizing hard work and faith in God.

Then they were given "seed" funding to encourage their new ventures. The ladies expressed profound gratitude and asked God to bless the efforts.

In these ways, together we are helping Christian women and families weather the losses of persecution – and build new lives for their families.

*"To grant to those who mourn in Zion –
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified."
Isaiah 61:3*

Thank you for your donations and prayers – you are helping persecuted Christians as they overcome challenges that we can barely imagine.

In Christ,

Wendy Wright

Wendy Wright
President

P.S. I hope you have a wonderful Mother's Day! After you celebrate, will you pray for Christian mothers like "Lilly" to be rescued from persecutors, for children to be accepted, for men to be restored, and that they will find healing in Christ?

Thank you for caring for truly "the least of these" Christians.