

EASTER HOPE IN RAQQA, SYRIA

Like Jesus, His people carry scars. Over the last few years, we have heard the voices of believers across the region tell of their suffering, share their faith, and show their inspiring courage and ability to forgive. It is clear that, where hope seems dead and life extinguished, Easter power is at work.

About Roubeen shared how 500 Christian families dwindled to just nine as they fled the months of terror. Eventually IS invaded and came to his home at dawn. About Roubeen told them he “was ready for jizya or to be killed for Christ’s sake”.

Today, About Roubeen’s faith remains strong, but the siege has taken its toll. The continuous air bombardments have given him panic attacks and he was injured by shrapnel from a missile strike only days before Raqqa was liberated.

Despite this, the message that he and other Christian residents shared was one of resilience and hope. “We want our churches renovated and the Christians to return to their homes,” About Roubeen said.

After months of terror in his home town of Tabeka, Syria Abdel Hakeem has told us: “Even though the situation isn’t good, at least we are free now and living in dignity. We are living in freedom and waiting for our friends and loved ones to return to live together as before. There’s compassion and love... Life is returning to Tabeka.”

- **Thank God for the Christians of Raqqa who risked everything, even their lives, to remain faithful to Him.**
 - **Pray for peace for Syria, and an end to the bitter conflict that has all but destroyed it.**
 - **Let’s ask God to replace brokenness with wholeness, fear with faith, and isolation with deep connection.**
 - **Let’s pray that the whispered worship of secret believers would ring out across the Middle East and North Africa. May many voices, including our own, join with them and grow in number and volume and passion.**
- Together, with our family across the Middle Eastern region, let’s raise our Easter song.**
- May it resound from the mountains and echo in heaven.**

Source: <https://www.sat7uk.org/pages/lent2018/>



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Easter in a bombed church

MAKING HOPE VISIBLE

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SAT-7 CELEBRATES NOROOZ WITH PERSIANS WORLDWIDE

Millions of Persians around the world celebrated Norooz, the Persian New Year and the first day of spring on 30 March. SAT-7 PARS celebrated with a special Norooz program aimed at connecting with Persians around the world.

Norooz, which translates as ‘New Day’, is a special time for Persians to spend with family and friends, and so the SAT-7 PARS family came together for a unique Norooz program. “We wanted to produce something so that Persian Christians could celebrate Norooz in a way that is relevant to their faith and know that their family around the world are supporting them and praying for them,” Producer Moe Pooladfar explains. “Viewers in Iran may be isolated from other believers, or if they live abroad, they may be isolated from friends and family.”

The hope is that all viewers felt connected to their wider Persian and Christian family through SAT-7 PARS’ Norooz celebrations.

While looking forward to the new year with hope and expectation, the team also recognised that it had been a difficult year for many: “Many people lost loved ones, so we tried to be sensitive and offered comfort and support.”

SAT-7 PARS’ usual programs also had a Norooz theme throughout the week. The cultural traditions and history of Norooz, and how faith in God can help us start the new year with hope and passion were discussed.

Pastor Milton, a familiar presenter on SAT-7 PARS, led viewers into the new year with prayer and worship.

- **Pray that in the year ahead, SAT-7 PARS will lead more people in Farsi-speaking nations to look to Christ for new beginnings and a hopeful future.**
- **The Iranian church is one of the fastest-growing in the world. Thank God for the Christians and pray that they will persevere in faith, even under pressure.**
- **Pray His blessing on the many thousands of unknown believers of Iran, and pray He would strengthen and encourage them.**



MEET OUR VIEWERS

Please pray for the following viewers while reading their messages:

From a viewer in the Middle East - “Since my sisters and I learned more about Christ, my father forbade us to eat with the family. He forced one of my sisters to marry a man who restricts her contact with others. Despite all that, my other sister and I are treating our father with love. Pray that he can understand Jesus’ love.”

From a viewer in Morocco - “Pray for me to get a Bible and for people in my country to learn that Christianity is about peace and love.”

From a viewer in Afghanistan - “My parents were killed four years ago by a violent group, so I started doubting my faith. Through your programs, I found my faith. Pray that I can speak about it to people.”

From a viewer in Turkey - “I had an arranged marriage. My husband is rude and tough. He forces me a lot and is cheating on me. If I get divorced, my family won’t accept me. Please pray for me.”

From a viewer in Iran - “I called you during your program and you prayed for my brother who was in the bondage of addiction. After the prayer, my brother arrived home and said he was going to rehab. I’m so thankful. Continue to pray for us.”



MESSAGES FROM TURKEY

Serkan

Following the programme, Serkan in Istanbul contacted SAT-7 TÜRK to say:

“I watched your programme *Face to Face* with great interest. I am not a believer but I see myself as very close to Christianity. In the programme, I got the impression that the Holy Bible has no contradictions with our world today. Today’s world puts humankind under such a pressure that there is no other place than the Bible to seek shelter. The real goal is to live this modern life in the framework of holy principles brought by Jesus. I want to thank you for making a programme like this.”

Kivanç

After his father died, teenager Kivanç tried to bury his pain and questions in drinking, smoking and partying.

While his mother experienced God’s strength helping her, Kivanç felt weighed down by his burdens and those of his friends. Then, through his mother’s prayers and witness, Kivanç learnt that “Jesus has been already the carrier of all burdens and troubles”.

While his mother was the first Christian in her neighbourhood and many criticised her faith, today all but one member of her family have come to Christ.

- Thank God for SAT-7’s Turkish channel, as it makes God’s love visible to the people of Turkey.
- Ask that many more people in Turkey would hear God’s voice through watching SAT-7.

MEET OUR VIEWERS

Please pray for the following viewers while reading their messages:

From a viewer in Iran - “A friend and I gave a Bible to another friend who came to faith. Her parents have taken us to court. Pray they won’t find her Bible or harm us. Pray they understand who Christ is.”

The show, *Revisions with Maher Fayeze* with well-known singer Maher Fayeze, received several positive comments from viewers on social media. One wrote: “We pray for the unity of the churches. Your humility, meekness, and avoiding of people’s acclaim make me feel that the Lord will be glorified in you as you help unite the churches, even though emperors tried and failed. May the Lord bless your service and give you joy in Jesus Christ.”

A new Christian in Iran said: “God has used you to save us. We are spiritually fed by your teachings. Wherever I go, I tell people about all that I’ve learned from your programs. People warn me not to, but how can I keep quiet? I was dead, but now I’m alive.”

From a 10 year old boy in Egypt: “I love you so much, Mr Know [presenter of *Why is That?*]. You love Jesus with all your heart and I dream that one day I will be like you. I have a question: Why did God created the angel that turned out to be Satan when He knew what would happen? Thanks for your love and waiting for your answer.”