

## Eritrea: She Blessed the Guards Who Were Torturing Her

Eritrea remains one of the most repressive countries in the world for religious freedom, often called “the North Korea of Africa.” The authoritarian regime continues its radical secular ideology aimed at eradicating independent religious expression. While all faith communities suffer, evangelical Christians remain among the most heavily targeted.

Current estimates indicate that between 2,000 and 3,000 Christians remain imprisoned for their faith in Eritrea, enduring horrific conditions such as confinement in metal shipping containers that become unbearable in the desert heat.

Since 2014, thousands of Eritrean Christians have fled persecution, seeking refuge in neighboring countries like Ethiopia and Sudan. However, refugee camps are often overcrowded and under-resourced, forcing many like Terhas to live in precarious and difficult conditions — yet their faith endures.

Terhas (name changed for protection) grew up under this harsh reality. Despite the risks, she and other believers met secretly for worship until her arrest. In her own words:

“They crammed all of us women into one room where the air was heavy and difficult to breathe. Many began to struggle and some nearly suffocated. We had no supplies, no food, and no water. Yet we remained cheerful and greeted the guards each morning with ‘Praise the Lord.’ They forbade us to say it or mention Jesus, but we persisted.”



The interrogations were brutal:

“They slapped us, insulted us, and beat us. Each night, they asked if we would leave Jesus. We answered, ‘He is the life. How can we leave life?’ We remained steadfast.”

Upon her release, Terhas returned to underground gatherings, meeting in small groups to avoid detection. When warned of imminent arrest, she fled Eritrea in 2014, narrowly escaping capture.

Now living in a refugee camp, Terhas continues her faith journey amid uncertainty and hardship, serving in the only church within the camp. Her story is a testament to the enduring power of faith and hope even in exile.

As of 2025, Eritrea’s crackdown on religious freedom continues unabated. Many believers remain imprisoned, and thousands more live as refugees, facing daily struggles but also demonstrating remarkable resilience.

Terhas’s courage challenges us to remember and pray for those suffering for their faith, and to support efforts to bring justice, freedom, and peace to Eritrea and its displaced communities.