

A Refugee's Story of Faith amidst Persecution

Story Date: September 2025



My name is Tina, and I was born and raised in Iran in a nominal Muslim family. In 2006, during a deeply traumatic time when my father was gravely ill, a Christian friend offered to pray for me. For the first time, I experienced an overwhelming sense of peace and joy. The next day, I found myself speaking to God, asking Him for help. That same week, I had a vivid vision: I was trapped in mud until blood from a cross touched the ground and cleansed everything around me. I then heard a voice say, "I am Jesus, your Savior." That moment changed my life.

In 2007, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ. From that point on, my life was devoted to serving the church. I joined a local Assemblies of God congregation, attended discipleship classes, and served in church media. My transformation was clear to those around me. I later married a fellow church member named Attoh, but over time, he renounced his faith and became abusive. When I refused his demands for divorce, he used his father's government connections to threaten and harass me.

In 2013, as persecution against Christians intensified, our church was shut down and meetings moved underground. On returning from a Christian seminar in Istanbul, I was detained at the airport, interrogated, and nearly charged for carrying Bibles. Though my passport was returned, I was warned that the case was still open. My husband later threatened to have me arrested if I did not agree to the divorce. His harassment extended to my mother, and our home was searched multiple times. Fearing arrest and persecution, I fled to Turkey and sought asylum.

While in Turkey, I was diagnosed with cancer. But even in this, God was near. Through prayer and medical care, I survived — and my faith deepened. After a few years, a congregation in Toronto, in partnership with ORAT, sponsored me to come to Canada. I knew then that God was leading me to a new home, new family, and new beginning.

Before my arrival, my sponsor church encouraged me to improve my English. I am deeply grateful for that advice. Being able to communicate helped me integrate, make friends, and manage everyday life, from the bank to public services. In Iran, I was not even allowed to ride a bicycle as a girl. Here, I learned to ride a bike, and in just my second month, I passed my motorcycle licensing test and bought my own motorbike. It's more affordable than a car and helps me get to church, work, and friends.

I've worked part-time in several positions despite my physical disability and am now preparing to begin college and transition into full-time work. I am especially thankful to the people at ORAT for praying for and helping someone they had never met. Your compassion changed my life.

If you're considering sponsoring refugees, please encourage them to learn English before they arrive to Canada. It is the most important tool they can have to start a new life here in Canada.

May the Lord bless you all.