

IT'S NOT THEM, *it's us*

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LOVE, DEDICATION AND FAITH

COLOMBIA

When we think of religious persecution we don't imagine that it occurs so close to Brazil. We always think of distant countries, such as North Korea, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, among others. However, in Latin America, it also exists and is experienced by followers of Christ in Colombia.

Christians living in the rural areas of Colombia are persecuted and controlled by armed groups, paramilitaries, criminal organizations, among others. This occurs because the church is seen as a threat for preaching against violence, converting gang members, and speaking out against corruption.

Often, we believe that situations like these no longer exist in the world. But they do, and they affect more than 360 million persecuted Christians worldwide.

In Colombian territory, leaders are threatened and forced to follow the rules

of armed groups illegally. And many are killed when they refuse to comply with what has been imposed on them.

Violence is also extended to children, who are often kidnapped to force the church to dislocate. The women, frequently, suffer with sexual abuses as a form of coercion. The young people are recruited and forced to participate in extortions, murders, and other forms of violence, and when they refuse, they face death threats and violent acts.

In 2023, Colombia rose in the persecution ranking, taking the 22nd place due to violence increasing, intolerance and the killing of christians.

Although, even through the suffering, our brothers remain **faithful**, loving Christ and dedicating themselves to the work with **love** and **faith**.



STRENGTHENING AND BEING STRENGTHENED.

COLOMBIA

In April of this year, the president of MAIS Mission, Luiz Renato Maia, along with a team of missionaries (Brazilian Base of MAIS) and pastors from “Casa de Deus” Church (Jundiaí-SP), made a trip to visit MAIS projects in Colombia.

The purpose of the trip was also to get to know and accompany the new pastors, and to build a bridge between the stable church (brazilian) and the suffering church (colombian).

The Brazilian pastors, who already support the projects of MAIS, could get to know a bit closer the reality of the Colombian church. It was about seven days full of challenges and great experiences of fortifying faith in Christ.

In the attempt of bringing some love and encouragement to our brothers and sisters, so they can remain strong in Christ; our faith was strengthened upon hearing so many testimonies of love for the Gospel and the stories filled with faith and persistence.

Families, even with limited financial

conditions, made it a point to prepare the best dishes that they could to honor the presence of each one on our team.

Some local pastors walked for hours with the sole aim of being in communion with us. A simple hug has more meaning than many words.

During the trip, several locations were visited, in some areas it was necessary to request authorization from the “responsible group”. At night, we had to sleep in hammocks in some places. Heat, insects and the constant feeling of being on alert with the possibility of an attack.

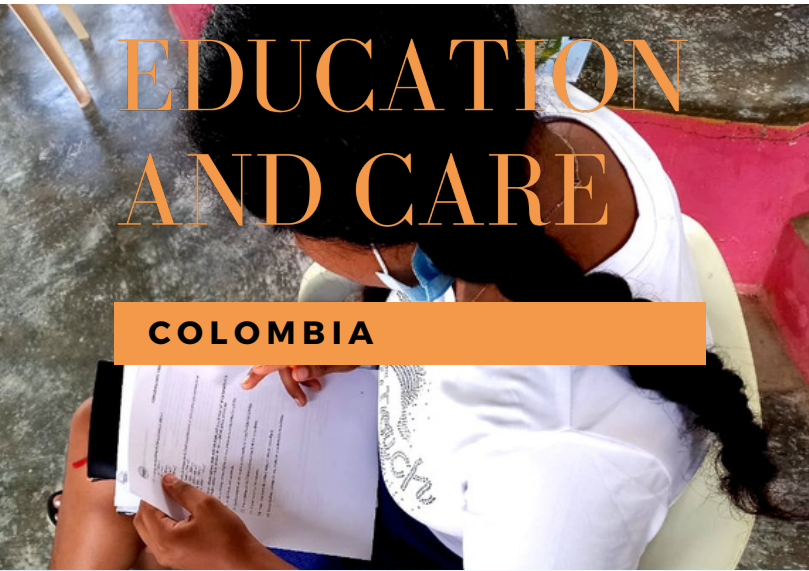
The services are not always held in churches with structure, benches and instruments. Some of them are improvised under tents with straw roofs, or on makeshift wooden benches in the midst of banana groves. However, **nothing stands in the way** of each man and woman of faith to keep spreading the Gospel of Christ with a smile on their faces.





EDUCATION AND CARE

COLOMBIA



The Biblical Seminary takes place in the Batata village - Tierralta in Córdoba, and it aims to capacitate and provide the necessary biblical tools for leaders and pastors who find themselves immersed in conflict zones, political and religious persecutions.

The access to a theological bible school in these areas counts with many difficulties, such as distance and the high financial costs associated with this type of education.

In this context, to study theology the person needs to travel to Tierralta, the only nearby town with a study center. The cost of this round trip is around 300,000 Colombian pesos (about \$72.93) per person, not including food and accommodation expenses. Which, within the reality of most local pastors, is not possible.

Therefore, the theological seminary in Batata, provides everything that the pastors, leaders and those interested in the course need: food, accommodation and theology training.

The theological course structure includes 13 leaders and pastors from different churches in the Tierralta region; some of them travel a day in advance to receive the study material. Many of these leaders use horses and mules as means of transportation, with each journey lasting around 4 to 6 hours, depending on weather conditions and other factors.

During the period, closer monitoring is carried out with each leader and pastor, a kind of discipleship, ensuring that these pastors have a support network and can discuss their needs, physical and emotional problems, and be encouraged not to give up.

A time of training and encouragement makes all the difference in the life of each pastor and leader, who are willing to learn more about the Word of God, and to equip themselves to proceed with the works done in the communities.

GENERATING DIGNITY

COLOMBIA

The armed conflict in Colombia, involving political issues, paramilitary forces, and drug trafficking, has been going on for many years. Families living in more remote areas suffer from armed control, mobility difficulties, and a lack of income.

When it involves Christians, everything becomes even more challenging, seeing that the advancement of the Gospel of Christ is not interesting for them, because it goes against what they preach: violence, drugs, child abuse, among other atrocities.

The Microcredit Project - **CREDMAIS** was the first initiative by MAIS implemented in Colombia in 2014. Its goal is to generate income, dignity, and hope so that our brothers and sisters can continue preaching the Gospel of Christ in areas of armed conflict.

Through this encouragement, many families have been able to implement their family business plans, such as banana cultivation and animal rearing, like chickens and pigs.

About 50 projects, benefiting more than 60 families, have been carried out since then, enabling many families to sustain themselves through the program.

Therefore, many dreams of having an income source have been realized. The money generated results in spontaneous smiles, gratitude, and faith to continue Christ's work.

Thus, the life of each beneficiary inspires us to continue being a **pillar of support** and **assistance** for the persecuted church. While our Colombian brothers and sisters remain steadfast even amidst threats, losses, and so much suffering, their love for Jesus and His work grows every day.

Let's stand with them.





FREEDOM TO SMILE AND DREAM

BRAZILIAN BASE

Childhood is the most important phase in an individual's life. This phase will determine and directly affect each person's physical, mental, social, and emotional development.

Children are often prevented from experiencing this stage of their lives with excellence. Whether it's because of family, economic, political, or even religious reasons.

Can you imagine everything that a child who has lived in the context of religious persecution had to face until finding a safe place with their parents? These situations are hard even to fathom, let alone live through.

All these experiences leave scars, memories, traumas, fears, and so many other things that often mark their lives forever.

All the challenges they've faced do not end once they're safe, especially when they arrive in another country and are met with more challenges: an entirely different culture and language.

As an organization, we do our utmost to make these children, upon arriving in Brazil, feel welcomed and "at home".

That suspicious look slowly gains brightness, smiles become more natural, and before we know it, we see children running, playing, and laughing across the lawn. It's wonderful to witness this transformation.

Gradually, those scared and hopeless children realize that there's still a future full of possibilities ahead. And we are honored to be a part of each of their memories.



CHILDHOOD : COLLECTING MEMORIES OF LOVE AND HOPE.

BRAZILIAN BASE

Being a child is not just about being young in age. In Brazil, according to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, which instructs and standardizes the rights of children and adolescents, there are rights that must be ensured for each one of them. Some of these rights are: the right to life, health, food, education, sports, leisure, professionalization, culture, dignity, respect, freedom, community and family coexistence. Such duties are assigned not only to parents, family members, and the government, but also to the society as a whole.

During each child's stay at the City of Refuge, we do everything possible to ensure that the rights of each child is restored. We provide not only Portuguese classes, but also recreational activities, excursions, nature activities, cooking activities, sports activities, and much more. All of this to make them feel a part of our society and culture, with

dignity and respect.

Thus, in the second quarter of this year, the boys participated in a soccer tournament along with CTMAIS students at Parque da Uva, in Colombo/PR.

The volunteers from Norway, together with the Portuguese teachers, gave a cooking class to the children, teaching them how to make chocolate cupcakes. In addition, they learned and drew the flags of Afghanistan, Norway, and Brazil.

On a hot day, the children's class was replaced with a recreational water activity with a slide. Moreover, since the base is located on a farm, the children learned about plant cultivation and took part in planting tree saplings around the base, alongside the maintenance team.

Thus, we do everything with great **dedication**, so that each child's story can be marked with a touch of **love**.





REFUGEE:

FAITH, DETERMINATION AND COURAGE

BASE BRAZIL

#SomosTodosRefugiados



On June 20th, Refugee Day is internationally observed. 'Refugee' is a term used to describe people who need to leave their country of origin due to severe human rights violations or persecution, whether based on race, **religion**, nationality, membership in a social group, or political opinion.

Every day, thousands of people are **forced** to flee in search of a safe place, leaving behind everything they own and love, in search of security, shelter, and a fresh start.

The number of people in refugee situations around the world has been increasing due to conflicts, wars, and persecutions. In 2022, about 103 million people were displaced, with 27 million of them being refugees, according to UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency). It's essential to highlight that these figures represent **people**; they are not just statistics.

Indeed, the term 'refugee' is not found in the Bible; however, we come across many accounts of escapes and migrations, such as the case of Jesus, who had to flee to Egypt.

Thus, through God's Word, we are taught to care for and be concerned about foreigners and the afflicted, which shows God's care towards people in refugee situations.

"Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 22:21) (KJV)

"He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and **loves the foreigner** residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt." (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). (NIV)

Together, we give voice to the cause of refugees and the Church that suffers around the world. We shelter, care for, and support our persecuted brothers and sisters, as being one in the body - the body of Christ.

WE ARE ALL REFUGEES.



REFUGEE MONTH: DO MORE WITH LESS.

BRAZILIAN BASE

In recent years, MAIS has served and been a voice of the suffering church. This is not a simple task, but the testimonies of hope that we receive encourage us to continue.

Since 2013, we have welcomed **more than 500 christians**, who needed to urgently leave their countries. Moreover, we have worked and served refugees not only in Brazil but also in our international camps.

Based on this, we dedicate the month of June to the cause of refugees. We use our social media to provide information and share knowledge about the reality of the suffering church and refugees. In this way, we also allow people to have the opportunity to be part of this cause.

During this period, we launched the campaign "Do More with Less," which took place between June 19th and 30th.

Participation was through a single, one-time donation of R\$15. The goal was to

raise funds for the Mission's projects, providing aid to Christian Refugees. And together, we can be **hope** for those who have none. **Because it's not them, it's us!**

During this period, we had a live stream on YouTube featuring testimonies, information about our base, information about the persecuted church, and about refuge. Additionally, we had live sessions on Instagram on the topic, with the participation of Pastor Maia (president of MAIS), Pastor and Singer Fernanda Brum, Davi Lago, and Douglas Gonçalves from Jesus Copy.

You can watch the live session videos and get more involved with the cause of the suffering church through our Instagram ([@missaomais](#)) and YouTube ([MaisnomundoTV](#)).

Dare to be the answer for this time!



EASTER: "BECAUSE I LIVE, YOU WILL ALSO LIVE"

BRAZILIAN BASE

"God sent His beloved Son
 To save me and forgive
 On the cross, He died for my sins
 But He rose again and lives with the Father
 Because He lives, I can believe in tomorrow
 Because He lives, there is no fear
 But I know, I know that my life
 Is in the hands of my Jesus, who is alive"

"Because He Lives" - Christian Harp

Easter in Hebrew, "Pesach" means passage. In the Christian context, it means Jesus' transition from death (crucifixion) to life (resurrection). In other words, our redemption, because when Jesus paid the sin's price with His own life, He provided us salvation and eternal life from the moment we believe in Him and repent of our sins.

In the context of persecution, in most cases, it is not possible to celebrate this

date. But, when in a safe place, adults and children can celebrate the death and life of Jesus Christ.

This year, the students of the MAIS Training Center (CTMAIS), along with the missionaries, organized a recreational afternoon for the children in celebration of Easter. This afternoon was filled with laughter, facial painting, snacks, toys and stories.

The children from the local community were invited by the students themselves after conducting a community diagnosis.

Afghan and Brazilian children were together in a moment of recreation, learning about the true meaning and symbol of this date: Jesus, the Lamb of God.

"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29 (NIV)





One day, during Sunday School, they (armed group), murdered my brother while the pastor was preaching the Word.



TESTIMONY

COLOMBIA

My name is J., by God's grace I'm a pastor in the municipality of Batata, one of the remote areas in Colombia.

I wanna share a bit about my testimony before being called to the pastoral ministry. I was born in an area quite far from the urban area. And in 1997, due to wars, there was a lot of violence in Colombia. That's when they murdered my mom on the farm, took all that we had, and left us practically on the street.

In 2000, as we were recovering, the armed groups attacked again. Five people who were members of the church where I converted, were killed. And because of that, we had to leave, towards the urban center.

In that place, I began to gather in a church. One day, during Sunday School, they (armed group) murdered my brother while the pastor was preaching the Word. They did this inside the church, in front of all the people who were gathered there.

I went through this process with God's help. But, in 2011, they also killed my other brother, when he tried to return to the farm, the place from which we had left.

After all this, I received an invitation to shepherd a church in a rural area here in Colombia. But the church was precisely in the place where I had been through so much pain. I didn't want to come, but God made me understand in many ways that it was the correct thing to do.

And by God's grace, now I'm here to serve the Lord. It has been very difficult to accept, but the will of God must be done above ours.

- **What's the importance of the Biblical Seminary in your point of view?**

It's the opportunity given to the pastors who didn't have the possibility of leaving this territory to learn. As the Seminary arrived here, the students don't need to worry about leaving this area, which would've been very challenging because they are peasants, but now they can learn and serve the Lord here.

It's a tremendous blessing for us, and I thank God for all the people who, in one way or another, are contributing so that pastors here can graduate. I believe that it's extremely important for us that they have this opportunity.

- **Pastor, how do you remain faithful even in face of persecution?**

Well, I try to be as prudent as possible and to rely on God in prayer. I believe it has everything to do with the Lord's grace over my life; His strength is mine.

- **In a single sentence, who is God to you?**

For me, God is truly my everything. All that a human being needs is in God's hand.



Pray for The persecuted church!

Pray for Colombia

- For the pastors in the Choco department, because in many areas the **evening service** is prohibited.
- For the Colombian church, which is persecuted, **to remain faithful** during trials.
- For Criminal groups who want **to force** three churches in Medellín and Barranquilla to share the offers with them.
- That the Lord provides **security and resources** to the leaders and pastors who can care and accompany the persecuted churches in Colombia.
- For strategies to ensure that **Bibles** can reach churches in areas with a significant presence of armed groups.

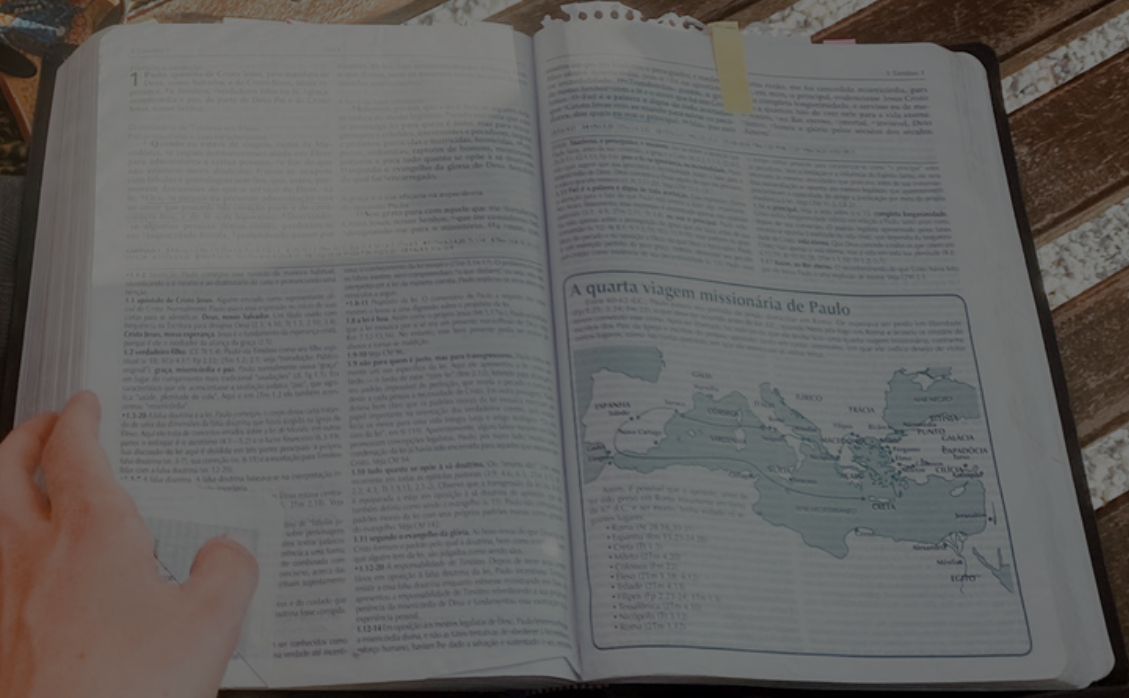
Follow the channel “MAIS MISSION - PRAYER REQUESTS” in WhatsApp:
<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaBZsFy3wtb4TsLGpU2D>

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”

Hebrews 13: 3



DARE TO BE THE ANSWER



MISSION IN SUPPORT OF THE SUFFERING CHURCH

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Ag: 0937
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