

PARENT / TEACHER LESSON PLANS



CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION



Summary

This lesson introduces a multi-faceted look at Christian persecution. Students are invited to complete a country profile that shines a light on how Christians are suffering from persecution. Students conclude by hearing about opportunities to help persecuted Christians.

Essential Question

How can persecuted Christians learn from each other about living in this world?

In this question, students work to understand how Christian persecution is something that is inevitable and still a phenomenon that needs to be combatted.

Summary

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Engage the students through conversation

- Introduce Christian persecution with students by soliciting ideas from them about stories they may have seen or heard in current events. Encourage them to give examples of what they think persecution might look like. More often than not, a beginning knowledge of Christian persecution will centre on violence.
- Ask students for their ideas on which country is most hostile to Christians. Students may be surprised that the most violent country is not necessarily the most hostile to Christians. The most hostile to Christians is North Korea while there are several that are more violent. Discuss with the class where these other elements of persecution could arise from.
 - In addition to violence, there can be persecution in the areas of church, national, community, family, private life.

Explore what the Bible has to say

- Distribute *Handout 1 – Exploring What the Bible Says* and ask students to read and study each of the provided texts.
- Students should respond to each of the prompts provided on *Handout 1 – Exploring What the Bible Says*.
- Gather the class into groups of 4-5 and invite them to lead a small-group discussion on each of the prompts.

Explore the World Watch List

- Review the *Teacher Overview – Christian Persecution*
- The World Watch List (WWL) is produced annually by Open Doors – an organization dedicated to serving persecuted Christians worldwide.
- Distribute *Handout 2 – Spheres of Persecution*. This handout is invaluable for their project as it outlines in detail how Christian persecution happens. It begins with ‘brokenness’ → impulse → fuel for a persecution ‘engine’ → a ‘driver’ to inflict persecution → a Christian is impacted in one of five life spheres or by violence.
- Take some time to review this so the students have a high-level understanding of how Christian persecution happens.

Optional material

Exploring the World Watch List Map

Task – Persecution Profile of a Country

- Depending on your students' level of familiarity with Christian persecution, use the link <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/> to check several different topics like:
 - What is Christian persecution?
 - Where does Christian persecution occur?
 - Why Christian persecution occurs?
 - Why we serve persecuted Christians.
 - Theology of Christian persecution.
- Review the World Watch List 2017 map available at any of the URLs provided with this lesson plan. The WWL 2017 map is also on page 6 of the included pdf from OpenDoors USA.
- <http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/country-profiles/> is a link to an interactive map.
- Distribute *Handout 3 – Persecution Profile*. Students must each individually choose a country and do a Persecution Profile on it. This assignment could be a simple poster project, a narrated and illustrated video, a news report, or a slide presentation.
- In this Persecution Profile they should include:
 - Demographic Statistics
 - A discussion on the country's ranking on the WWL (previous WWL rankings can be obtained via the interactive map at <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/01/2016-world-watch-list-drawn-from-world-headlines/>; by clicking on a country you can retrieve the 2014-2016 WWL rankings). Note well, that a drop in rankings doesn't mean they're friendlier towards Christians – it just means there are more countries more hostile. For example, China in 2017 is #39 but in 2016 was #33. Their level of hostility towards Christians remained at the same intensity level.
 - Include personal stories of Christians that are available on the website links provided with *Handout 3 – Persecution Profile*.
 - Provide a detailed look at how persecution is experienced by Christians in that country in each of the different spheres.
- After students have completed their report, post an artifact of their presentation around the classroom as a visible reminder of the persecution faced by Christians around the world.
- Included with this lesson are two pdf documents *WWL Country Profiles*, and *2017 World Watch List*. It provides approximately 450-500 word summaries on each of the countries as it relates to the different spheres. It is not available on a public website so the teacher will need to assume responsibility for printing and making available the relevant sections.
- Other resources for country profiles:
 - Find detailed country profiles here:
http://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/country_profiles.php

Extension

- More country profiles can be found here:
<http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/country-profiles/>
 - Another source of country profiles can be found at:
<https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/countries/>
 - Another look from a different organization with videos is at:
<https://www.vomcanada.com/restricted-nations.htm>
- After the class has made each of their presentations, students should evenly divide the task of looking at Canada and seeing what kind of persecution exists in Canada. It may help to consider the brokenness → impulse → engine → driver model.
 - Also consider the different spheres of where Christian persecution can enter. Answer the question: "Do Christians experience persecution in Canada?"
 - Invite a speaker to provide areas of opportunity to help persecuted Christians. The City of Refuge is a Free Reformed Ministry aimed at assisting persecuted Christian refugees to resettle and integrate into Canada.

Teacher Overview – Christian Persecution

Religious Persecution

*Unless otherwise noted, the facts from this report come from Paul Marshal, et. al., *Persecuted: the Global Assault on Christians* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2013).*

Ayman Nabil Labib was a seventeen-year-old high school student in the Upper Egyptian town of Mallawi. Ayman was a Coptic Christian. On October 16, 2011, his Arabic-Language teacher began insulting and harassing the teenager during class. He told Ayman to wipe off the Coptic cross from his wrist. He told his teacher that it was a tattoo, and added that he was also wearing a necklace with a cross. When the teacher heard this, he became very angry and asked the rest of the class, “What are we going to do with him?” Seventeen of his fellow classmates chased Ayman as he struggled to escape. Ayman was forced into a teacher’s room where the group beat him to death.^[1]

Persecution in Our World Today

There are countless stories like Ayman’s. Religious persecution happens every day in our world, but these stories rarely make it into the daily news. Although we all know that persecution happens, many of us don’t know very much about it. Christians are the most persecuted group of believers in the world, suffering about 75% of all religious intolerance.^[2] Pope Francis has reiterated the call to stop persecution against Christians.^[3] However, many other religious minorities, like Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, also suffer religious persecution. These acts are unjust, and countries must be held accountable. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of this declaration states that,

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Countries like Iran and Pakistan have voted in support of this declaration, yet religious persecution is rampant in both these nations.

Religious Opposition

Persecution can come from religious opposition. For example, in South Asia, Christianity is often seen as an invading and foreign philosophy.^[4] For this reason there is ongoing violence. Christian churches in Nepal receive many bomb threats from extreme Hindu groups. Radical Buddhists in Sri-Lanka are pushing for anti-conversion laws. This restricts religious freedom, putting the lives of people who convert at risk. This is often directed against converts to Christianity.

The most widespread persecution today takes place in the Muslim world. Persecution can be done by the government, through laws about property rights, conversion, and blasphemy, through angry mobs, or through extremist groups, like Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. It is illegal for Muslims to convert to another religion in Malaysia. In Yemen, conversion from Islam is punishable by death. Some countries like Algeria go further, making evangelism illegal. Morocco has similar laws, aimed at stopping “religious terrorism.” In Turkey, Christians are being deprived of their churches and are not given permission to build new ones.

One of the worst offenders is Saudi Arabia. This Islamic state allows no non-Muslim place of worship, state schools teach children to “hate Christians”, and the state is governed by the principles of Sharia law. Influenced by the hard-line Wahhabi version of Islam, the religion police ensures that these laws are being strictly followed. Iran is another terrible place for religious minorities, with a growing number of stonings, dismemberments, executions of minors, and other forms of religious persecution. Conversion in Iran is punished by death. In Pakistan, Ahmadi Muslims and other religious minorities are persecuted. Pakistan also has vague anti-blaspheming laws. Those who insult Islam, the prophet Mohammed, or Allah either directly or indirectly can be punished by hefty fines, lifelong imprisonment, and death. The vagueness of these laws can

lead to punishment of non-Muslims who even touch a Qur'an. On top of all these atrocities there are many kidnappings and forced conversions in many of these Muslim-majority countries.

Besides the actions of governments, extremists groups also wield a lot of influence. Whether it is the Taliban in Afghanistan, or Al-Shabab systematically killing Christians in Somalia, these groups are fighting a self-confessed religious war against Jews, Christians, and all other infidels. Although many world leaders praised the so-called “Arab spring”, it has only created more opportunity for influence by these extremist groups. One example of this is the growing power of Salafists and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The influence of these kinds of groups can clearly be seen in Nigeria, where there has been a growing number of mob-lynching and church bombing incidents.

State Opposition

Religious persecution also originates from the desire for total state control. This can mostly clearly be seen in Communist and Post-Communist countries like Russia, China, and North Korea. Russia, although not Communist anymore, still has a lot of power centralized in government. The “Council of Experts for Conducting Religious Studies Expert Analysis” includes Christian groups among “extremist groups” and monitors them. Many other post-Soviet countries also require official church registration, while forbidding churches that are “too small” or “too large.”

Communist countries, like China, require complete-commitment to the state, and therefore see Christianity as a threat. In Vietnam, all churches must be officially approved and registered by the state. House churches are illegal. China, although opening economically still has a lot of restrictions politically and spiritually. Only State-approved and State-run churches are allowed, and must submit to the authority of the state. Despite restrictions on house churches, there are many

all over China, and Christianity is growing rapidly. One method of control is through labour camps. Forced labour is the means, thought reform is the aim.

North Korea is perhaps the worst of the religious persecutors. Since the 1960s, churches have been closed, religious literature has been destroyed, and religious leaders have been executed or sent to prison camps. Worship of

any other person or object besides the Emperor is strictly prohibited.

Although these kinds of persecutions are not expressly one religion against another, it is clear that God has been replaced by an idol, the state. Christ teaches us to respect the authority God has placed over us but also warns about coming persecution. In [John 15:18-20](#), Christ speaks about the hatred of the world for Him, and therefore also for His followers.

[1] Kurt Werthmuller, “Copt’s Murder a Test of Egypt’s New Anti-Discrimination Law,” *National Review Online* (October 31, 2011), http://www.hudson.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=publication_details&id=8452; Interviews by Hudson Institute Center for Religious Freedom, Mallawi, October 2011.

[2] Paul Marshal, et. al., *Persecuted: the Global Assault on Christians* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2013), p. 4.

[3] <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-francis-prays-for-persecuted-christians-93981/>

[4] Paul Marshal, et. al., *Persecuted: the Global Assault on Christians* (Dallas: Thomas Nelson, 2013), p. 92.

OpenDoors



World WatchList 2017

A RANKING OF THE TOP 50 COUNTRIES WHERE
CHRISTIANS FACE THE MOST SEVERE
PERSECUTION FOR THEIR FAITH.



OpenDoorsUSA.org/WWL



David Curry,
CEO of Open Doors USA

We remember persecuted Christians — ...because we are united with these Christians as fellow members of the Body of Christ. The World Watch List should spur us on to live lives that are deeply rooted in this truth.

Dear Friend,

Take a look at any newspaper in America and you'll see evidence that the persecution of Christians is one of the central issues facing our world today. Immigration policy, the global economy, war — all of it affected by the persecution of over 215 million Christians living in the 50 countries on the 2017 World Watch List.

As Christian believers, we have been called to carry the Name and gospel message of Jesus Christ to a hurting and dying world. Doing so isn't always safe. The World Watch List provides factual data that confirms an unprecedented rise in Christian persecution. And behind the list are real people — our brothers and sisters in Christ — who are enduring persecution for His sake. Knowing this, how should we respond?

We start by responding as God's Word instructs us to. *"Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body."* (Hebrews 13:3)

It's pretty straightforward: we remember persecuted Christians — in our prayers, on our social media feeds, in our sermons, in our Bible studies, in the ways we spend our time, in the ways we use our resources — because we are united with these Christians as fellow members of the Body of Christ. The World Watch List should spur us on to live lives that are deeply rooted in this truth.

This is what Open Doors is all about. We've been on the ground serving persecuted Christians around the world for over 60 years, and we continue to mobilize and equip Christians in the West to stand with their persecuted family through opportunities for prayer, advocacy and tangible support. I pray that this booklet encourages you to join us.

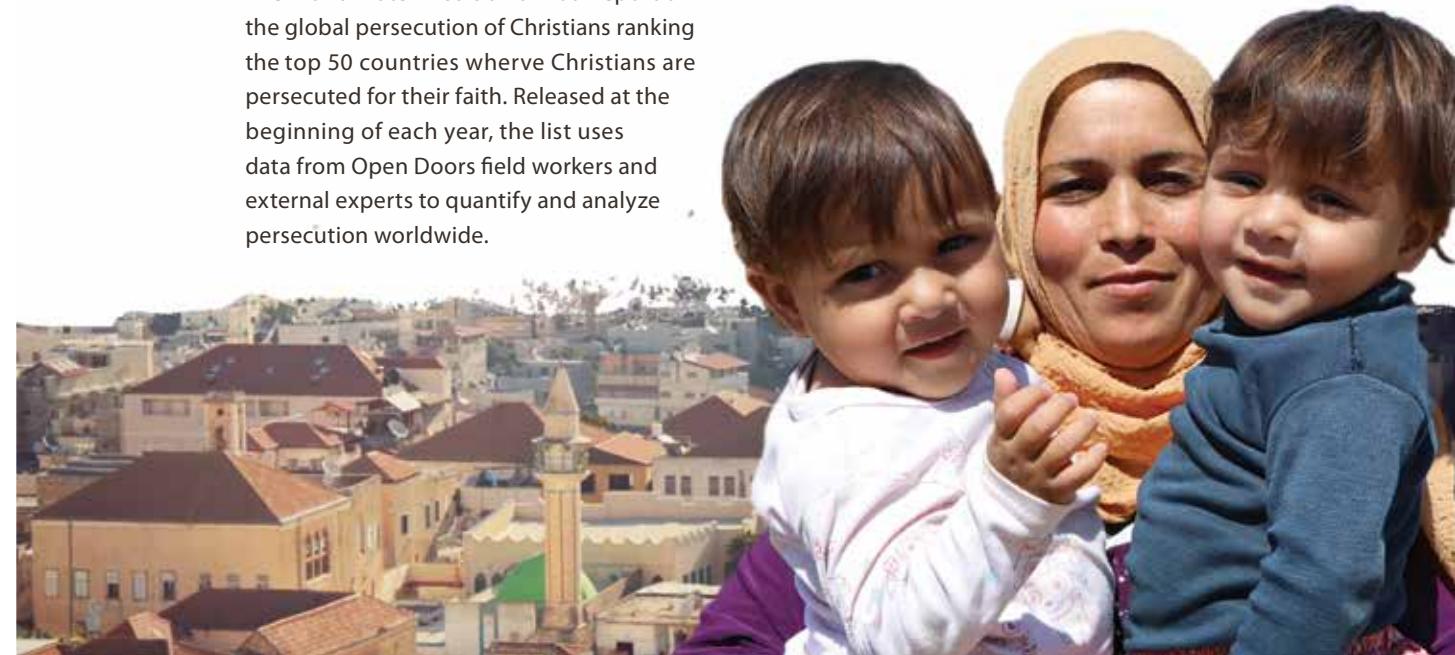
Have you given up on the commission? This isn't the time for timidity — let's reach our world for Jesus as the united Body of Christ.

Your partner in this most worthwhile of efforts,

David Curry
President & CEO
Open Doors USA

What is the World Watch List?

The World Watch List is an annual report on the global persecution of Christians ranking the top 50 countries where Christians are persecuted for their faith. Released at the beginning of each year, the list uses data from Open Doors field workers and external experts to quantify and analyze persecution worldwide.



How are the Countries Ranked?



Countries are ranked by the severity of persecution of Christians, calculated by analyzing the level of violent persecution plus the pressure experienced in 5 spheres of life. The rankings and report are audited by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. For the detailed methodology, visit ODUSA.org/WWLMethology

PRESSURE
Degree of pressure in five spheres of Christian life

Private Life
Max score = 16.7

+
 Family Life
Max score = 16.7

+
 Community Life
Max score = 16.7

+
 National Life
Max score = 16.7

+
 Church Life
Max score = 16.7

VIOLENCE
Amount of violent incidents against Christians and Church
Max score = 16.7

+ = **RANK #**
MAX SCORE = 83.3 MAX SCORE = 16.7 MAX SCORE = 100

Engines Of Persecution

Open Doors research identifies these 8 main 'engines' of persecution. They often work in tandem.

Islamic Extremism Attempts to bring the country or the world under the 'House of Islam' through violent or non-violent actions.	Religious Nationalism Attempts to unite citizens under a single religious identity, often labeling those who don't conform as "outsiders" or "radicals."	Ethnic Antagonism Attempts to force the continuing influence of age-old norms and values shaped in tribal contexts. Often comes in the form of traditional religions.	Secular Intolerance Attempts to eradicate religion from both the public and private domains, imposing an atheistic form of secularism as the governing ideology.
Communist and Post-Communist Oppression Attempts to maintain Communism as a prescriptive ideology and/or controls the church through a system of registration and oversight inherited from Communism.	Denominational Protectionism Attempts to preserve one's Christian denomination as the dominant or only legitimate expression of Christianity in a particular country. In most cases, exercised by the majority Christian denomination.	Organized Corruption and Crime Attempts to create a climate of impunity, anarchy and corruption as a means of self-enrichment.	Dictatorial Paranoia Attempts to maintain power by any means necessary, usually without a particular vision in mind.

3 Major Trends Impacting the 2017 World Watch List



Nationalism is on the rise, especially in Asia. Insecure governments are using nationalism to preserve their power, to the detriment of minority Christian populations that don't fit the nationalist mold. Often, this nationalism is religious in nature. Buddhist extremism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, as well as Hindu extremism in India, are driven by religious nationalism and result in the violent persecution of the Christian minority.



Islamic radicalization in sub-Saharan Africa is becoming mainstream. While the territorial foothold of Islamic State is under assault, its influence has spread. The group has shared technical experience and financial support with terror networks throughout Asia and Africa, and generous funding from Saudi Arabia has facilitated a new network of extremist schools in Somalia, Kenya, Niger and Burkina Faso.



Polarization between radical and more autocratic regimes in the Middle East continues to affect Christians, who are targets of both Sunni and Shia extremists. Heavyweight rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia are filling the leadership vacuum in the region, and Christians are caught in the resulting crossfire. The mass forced migration of Christians in the Middle East for over a decade now shows that the birthplace of Christianity has become a place of severe Christian persecution.

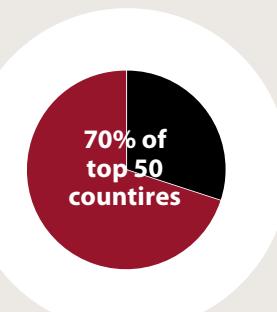
Persecution Trends – Key Facts



Worldwide, persecution of Christians has risen for the fourth year in a row.



North Korea is number one again, as it has been since 2002.



Islamic extremism fuels persecution in 14 of the top 20 countries, and 35 of the top 50.

215 MILLION Christians experience persecution in the countries on the World Watch List



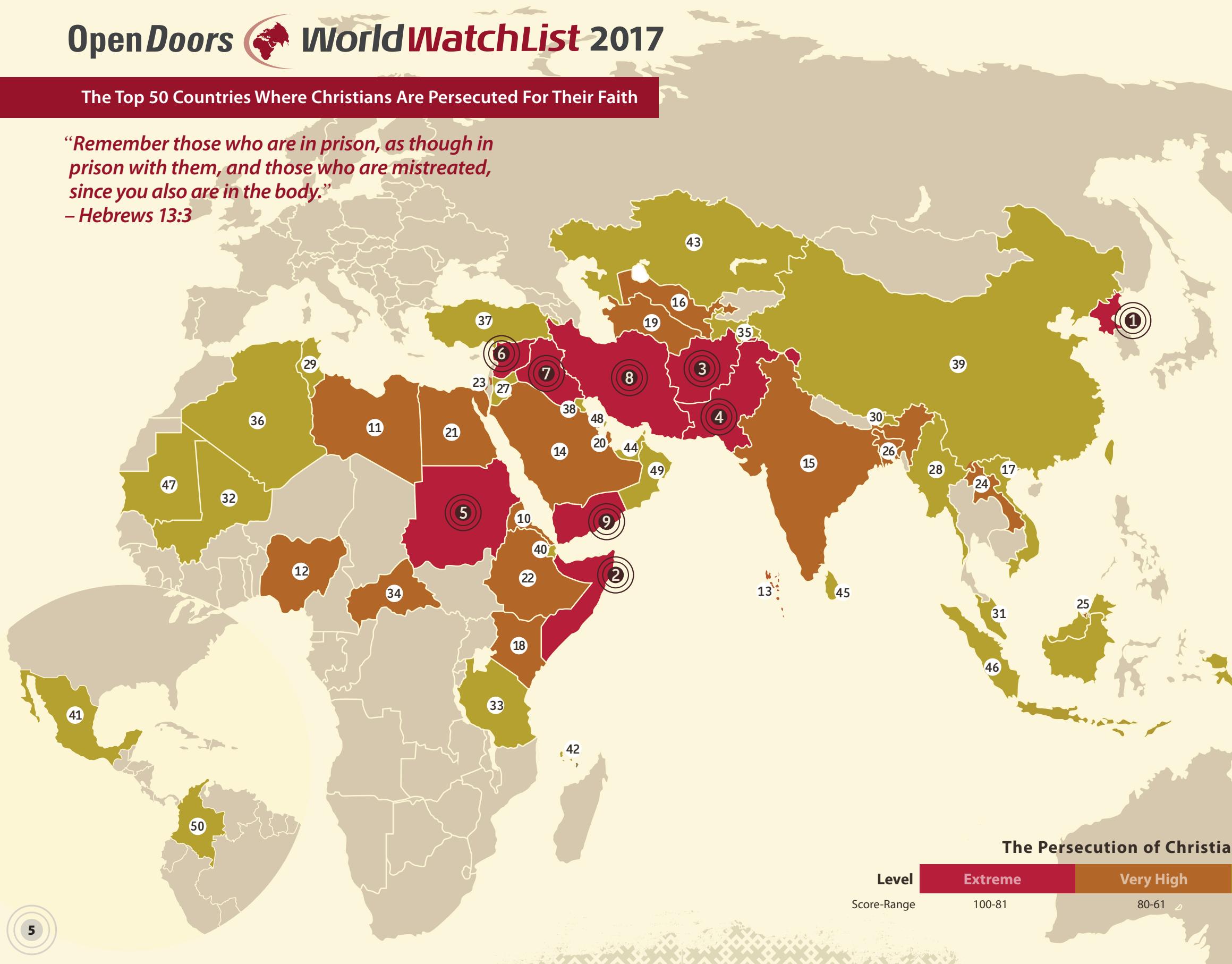
Approximately **1 in 12 Christians** experience persecution for their faith.

OpenDoors World WatchList 2017

The Top 50 Countries Where Christians Are Persecuted For Their Faith

“Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.”

– Hebrews 13:3





NORTH KOREA

92/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

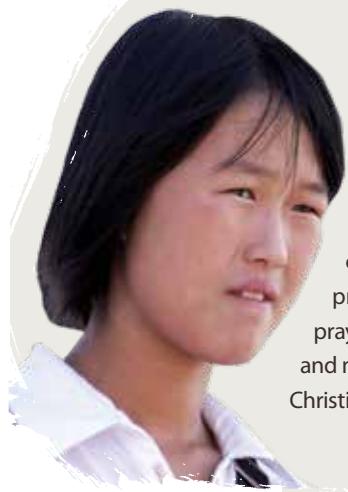
Leader: Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un
Population: 25,405,000 (300,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Atheism, Traditional Beliefs

Government: Communist State
Source of Persecution: Communist Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

The Worst Place on Earth for Christians

Once again, North Korea is ranked as the most oppressive place in the world for Christians, #1 on the World Watch List. In this totalitarian communist state, Christians are forced to hide their faith completely from government authorities, neighbors and often even their own spouses and children. Due to ever-present surveillance, many pray with eyes open, and gathering for praise or fellowship is practically impossible. Worship of the ruling Kim family is mandated for all citizens, and those who don't comply (including Christians) are arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed. Entire Christian families are imprisoned in hard labor camps, where unknown numbers die each year from torture, beatings, overexertion and starvation. Those who attempt to flee to South Korea through China risk execution or life imprisonment, and those who stay behind often fare no better.

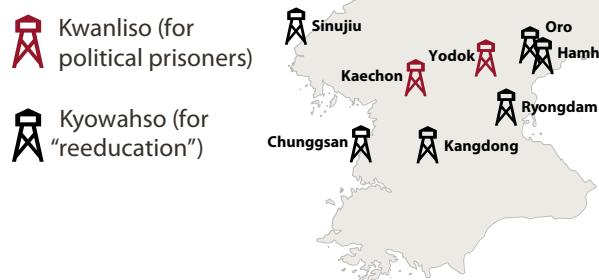
Through local partners, Open Doors is serving Christians in North Korea by providing them with emergency relief aid, along with Bibles, books and other discipleship materials. Open Doors partners in China also provide shelter and aid for Christians who have fled North Korea.



Testifying in Prison

As Hea Woo looked into her husband's cell, she couldn't believe her eyes. The man before her was hardly recognizable from the torture. He covertly slipped something into her hand that would change her life forever: his profession of faith. Later, she also began to follow Christ and ended up in a cell of her own. Despite being faced with starvation and torture, Hea Woo realized that she had been given an opportunity to share the gospel with those around her. Before long, a number of women in the camp had placed their faith in Christ, and secret gatherings for fellowship began in the prison outhouse. In this, the most unlikely of places, the women silently sang songs of praise, prayed and shared Bible verses with one another. Amazingly, she was later released from prison and managed to flee to South Korea. Her testimony is representative of the many North Korean Christians who suffer in prison camps each year, and serves as a reminder of God's faithfulness.

NORTH KOREA'S PRISON CAMPS



How You Can Pray

Pray for North Korean believers who are languishing in prison camps, and for the proclamation of the gospel, both in and outside the prison walls. Also pray that Christians in the country will have access to Bibles and fellowship.

VISIT ODUSA.ORG/NORTHKOREA FOR MORE.



SOMALIA

91/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

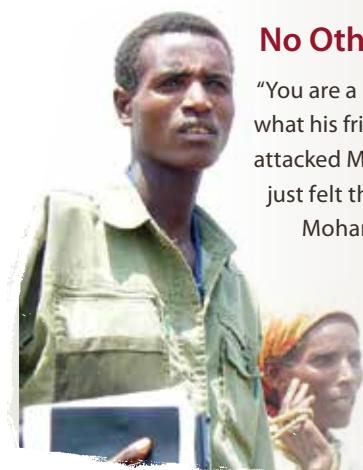
Leader: President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud
Population: 11,392,000 (a few hundred Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Federal Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism, Ethnic Antagonism

Where Martyrdom Is Commonplace

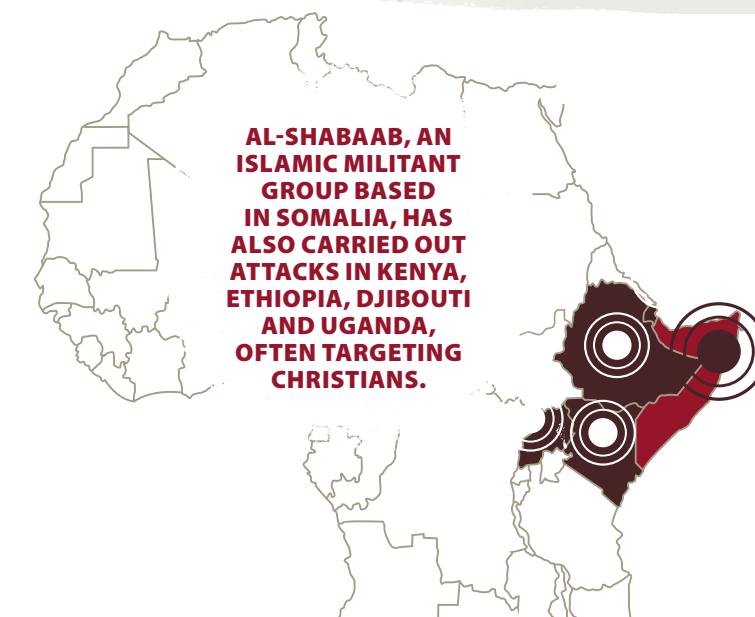
Somalia has been on the World Watch List since 1993. Because Islam was already firmly established in the country before the arrival of Christianity, life for Christian believers is defined by violent hostility. Somalia's tribal system is very resistant to democracy and other modern forms of government, which means that Christians have no voice or rights in society. Islamic extremism in the country makes matters even worse. Since the downfall of Ziad Barre in 1991, Somalia has become a haven for Islamic militants who fiercely persecute Christians. Christian converts from Islam face the worst of the persecution, and the mere suspicion of apostasy or conversion leads to a rushed public execution. As a result, the Christian population in Somalia only amounts to hundreds, a remnant that endures great sorrows for bearing the name of Christ.

To aid believers in Somalia, Open Doors works through local partners, providing underground Christians with discipleship training, Bibles, Christian books, secret community development programs and more, helping these believers to survive under extreme persecution.



No Other Option

"You are a kaffir (infidel)! You will die!" When Mohammed heard the accusation, he already knew what his friend Ahmed had found: his Bible. Three nights after the discovery of the Bible, Ahmed attacked Mohammed with a knife. His friend's conversion deserved death. "I saw nothing—just felt the sudden sharp pain to my head and felt the blood streaming down my neck," Mohammed says. Ahmed ran. By the grace of God, neighbors were able to rush Mohammed to the hospital. "Ahmed was my friend, someone I've known for a long time. I housed him when he had nowhere to go, and in return, I got this. It is very painful." Yet, in spite of the pain, Mohammed continues to place his hope in Christ. "It is the only place where I have ever had inner peace. Despite the isolation and persecution, I am at peace. This is why I hold on to Christ. Going back to Islam is not an option."



How You Can Pray

Pray for Christians in Somalia who risk martyrdom if their faith is discovered, as they feel forced to keep their faith to themselves. Pray that they will have wisdom and discernment in sharing the gospel with others, along with a quiet boldness and sense of God's presence.

VISIT ODUSA.ORG/SOMALIA FOR MORE.



AFGHANISTAN

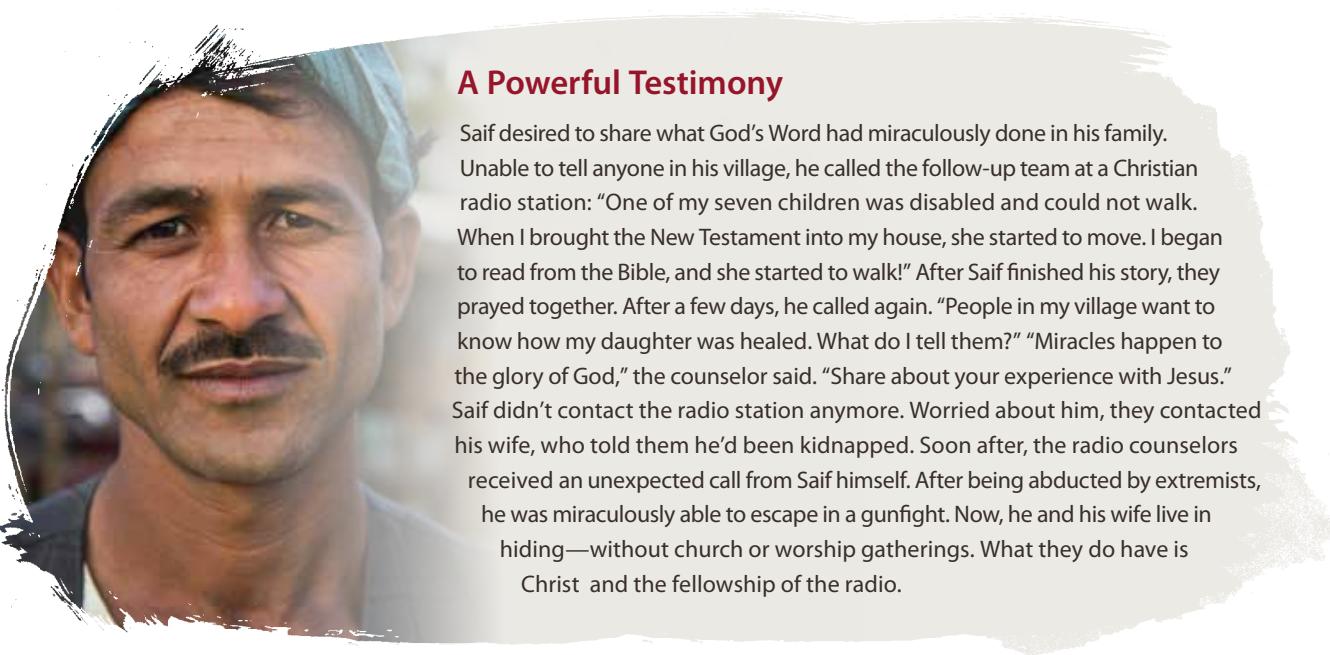
89/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: President Ashraf Ghani
Population: 34,169,000 (thousands of Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

When It Costs Everything

Christians in Afghanistan experience extreme persecution. Intense pressure is exerted on believers by families, friends, communities and local religious leaders. State authorities with little power use Islam as a unifying factor, especially as society agrees that conversion from Islam cannot be tolerated. Many who convert from Islam to Christianity are murdered once their extended families learn of their new faith. Other families send Christian converts to mental hospitals under the premise that no one in their right mind would renounce Islam. In any case, converts usually lose their rights to personal property and possessions, leaving them destitute. Belongings are often seized without warning after even the slightest signs of conversion, and family members persecute converts all the more harshly to protect both the family name and its possessions.

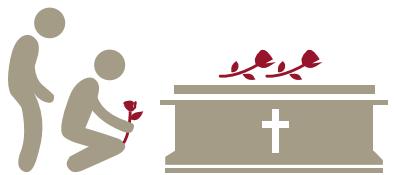
To help persecuted Christians in Afghanistan, Open Doors provides emergency aid, counseling, literacy training, radio programs, vocational projects, biblical and pastoral training courses and more.



A Powerful Testimony

Saif desired to share what God's Word had miraculously done in his family. Unable to tell anyone in his village, he called the follow-up team at a Christian radio station: "One of my seven children was disabled and could not walk. When I brought the New Testament into my house, she started to move. I began to read from the Bible, and she started to walk!" After Saif finished his story, they prayed together. After a few days, he called again. "People in my village want to know how my daughter was healed. What do I tell them?" "Miracles happen to the glory of God," the counselor said. "Share about your experience with Jesus." Saif didn't contact the radio station anymore. Worried about him, they contacted his wife, who told them he'd been kidnapped. Soon after, the radio counselors received an unexpected call from Saif himself. After being abducted by extremists, he was miraculously able to escape in a gunfight. Now, he and his wife live in hiding—without church or worship gatherings. What they do have is Christ and the fellowship of the radio.

CHRISTIANS IN AFGHANISTAN OFTEN LOSE EVERYTHING, INCLUDING THEIR LIVES, FOR FOLLOWING CHRIST.



How You Can Pray

Pray for believers in Afghanistan who lack fellowship, especially new converts who fear telling anyone about their faith. Also pray for those who lose worldly possessions or loved ones to persecution. Pray that they will be able to forgive their persecutors to the glory of God.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/AFGHANISTAN FOR MORE.](#)



PAKISTAN

88/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif
Population: 196,744,000 (3,938,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Unjust Treatment, Violent Attacks

All Christians in Pakistan experience persecution, and for many it's extreme. Historical Christian communities exist openly, but have to put up with stringent rules and constant monitoring. Christian converts from Islam suffer the brunt of the persecution, usually at the hands of radical Islamic groups, family and neighbors. Protestant Christian communities are under scrutiny and suffer frequent attacks, especially when they are active in outreach to Muslims. Violent persecution is common. Christians are targets for murder, bombings, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages and eviction from home and country. Unjust and arbitrary blasphemy laws are used to punish Christians and prevent evangelism.

Through local partners in Pakistan, Open Doors is engaged in women's ministry, emergency aid, biblical and pastoral training, vocational learning projects, trauma counseling and more.

Pray for Pakistan

+ Pray for Christians in Pakistan, especially those who risk being charged with blasphemy by friends, family and neighbors.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/PAKISTAN FOR MORE.](#)



SUDAN

87/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: President Omar al-Bashir
Population: 42,166,000 (1,996,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

Persecution and Sectarian Strife

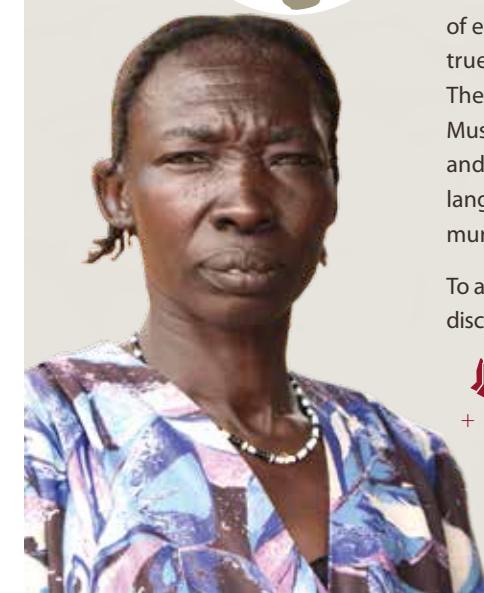
Sudan has been on the World Watch List since 1993 and has almost always been ranked in the top 20 over the years. Persecution in the country is systemic and reminiscent of ethnic cleansing. Under the authoritarian rule of al-Bashir and his party, there is no true rule of law in Sudan; freedom of expression has been almost entirely curtailed. The ethnic-cultural landscape is complicated and divisive: Arab versus ethnic Africans, Muslims versus Christians. Historically, Islam is deeply embedded in Sudanese society and the government is strictly implementing a one religion, one culture and one language policy, which results in the persecution of Christians. Arrests, attacks and murders plague all Christian communities in the country.

To aid persecuted believers in Sudan, Open Doors works through local partners to provide discipleship training, persecution-preparedness and theological training, and trauma care.

Pray for Sudan

+ Pray for Sudanese Christians who risk all for the sake of the gospel, evangelizing and preaching in spite of the danger.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/SUDAN FOR MORE.](#)





SYRIA

86/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: President Bashar al-Assad
Population: 18,907,000 (794,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Persecution and Civil War

The overall situation in Syria is characterized by heavy persecution of all types of Christians in areas held by ISIS and other Islamic militants. Many Christians have already fled areas that are held by Islamic militants (including ISIS) and have had their homes destroyed in the conflict. The Syrian opposition is becoming increasingly "Islamized" and the civil war is morphing into a form of jihad against the Syrian government. The concentration of remaining Christians in strategic areas is an important factor in their vulnerability to attack, as is their alleged support for the government. Most churches are in ruins, yet some Christians make a deliberate choice to stay and reach out to fellow Syrians with the gospel.

Through the support of local partners of Open Doors, Syrian Christians are receiving relief aid, Bibles, discipleship materials, church leadership training, trauma counseling and more.

Pray for Syria

- + Pray for believers in Syria who haven't fled the country. Pray that they will be used as strong witnesses of Christ's love in the midst of war.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/SYRIA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/SYRIA)



IRAN

85/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
Population: 80,946,000 (800,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression

A "Threat" from the West

In Iran, Christianity is considered a western influence and a threat to the Islamic identity of the Republic. Converts to Christianity from Islam make up the largest group of Christians and experience the worst persecution. Other Protestant Christian communities that evangelize Muslims are the second most persecuted group. Communities of expatriate Christians from Asia and the West sometimes experience forced church closures, while historical Christian communities made up of Armenian and Assyrian Christians are protected by law, yet treated as second-class citizens. Arrest and violence are commonplace for anyone engaged in Christian ministry or evangelism.

Open Doors supports Christians in the region with Bible and literature distribution, training, media projects, advocacy and more.

Pray for Iran

- + Pray for Christians in Iran who suffer persecution from their own families and communities because of their faith.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/IRAN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/IRAN)



IRAQ

86/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi
Population: 38,654,000 (230,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Parliamentary Democracy
Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression

Near Extinction

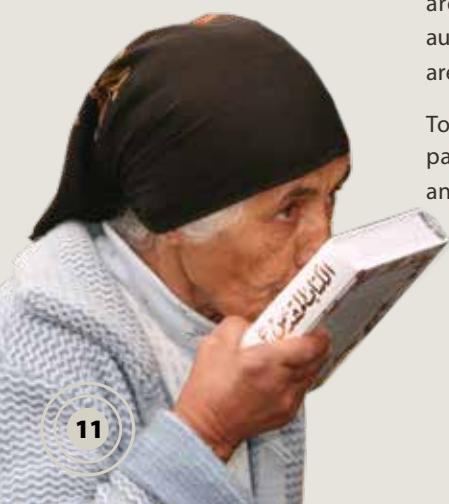
Christians have lived in Iraq for two millennia but are currently on the verge of extinction. Many have fled areas controlled by ISIS and other Islamic extremists. The overall persecution situation in Iraq is characterized by impunity, the threat of attacks and second-class treatment by the authorities. Historical and Protestant Christian communities are seriously affected by persecution, especially from radical Islamic movements, authorities and non-Christian leaders. Communities of converts to Christianity from Islam are the most severely persecuted, especially by their own families.

To help Christians suffering from persecution in Iraq, Open Doors works with local partners to provide the training, Bibles, microloans, building materials, crisis relief and other support they need to remain as lights in their war-torn nation.

Pray for Iraq

- + Pray for Iraqi believers who are rebuilding their lives after being forced from their homes by ISIS. Also pray that those who remain will be witnesses to their neighbors.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/IRAQ FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/IRAQ)



YEMEN

85/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION

Leader: President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi
Population: 28,120,000
(a few thousand Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression, Ethnic Antagonism

War and Islamic Extremists

For the most part, only converts to Christianity from Islam remain in Yemen, as communities of expatriate Christians (from the West, Africa and Asia) have left due to the devastating war in which civilians bear the brunt of the violence. The country has seen political turmoil and chaos since 2012 when the former president was ousted, and is currently facing a dire humanitarian crisis. Eighty percent of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance, and more than half the population is food insecure, making Yemen's hunger crisis one of the worst in the world. In the midst of this bleak situation, believers are at the greatest risk due to ostracizing and persecution. The glimmer of hope is that reports show more Muslims turning to Christ in the country than ever before.

To stand with the persecuted church in Yemen, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer.

Pray for Yemen

- + Please pray for believers in Yemen who are facing intense fear due to threats from Islamic extremist groups.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/YEMEN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/YEMEN)





10

ERITREA

82/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION****Leader:** President Isaias Afwerki**Population:** 5,482,000 (2,741,000 Christians)**Main Religion:** Islam, Christianity**Government:** One-Party State**Source of Persecution:** DictatorialParanoia, Islamic Oppression,
Denominational Protectionism

Shipping-Container Prisons

The Eritrean regime is authoritarian and intolerant towards any forms of association, dissent or free expression. The government's attempt to control all religious institutions was particularly evident in the deposing and replacing of the Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC) in 2007. He has remained under house arrest ever since. The EOC itself persecutes those who leave the Orthodox Church and become Evangelical or Pentecostal believers. The dire situation overall in Eritrea is contributing to the global refugee crisis. Thousands, including Christians, continue to flee the country. The inhumane treatment of Christian prisoners—thousands of whom have been arrested and imprisoned—has received a great deal of international attention. Many have been locked in shipping containers and died as a result.

To aid persecuted Christians in Eritrea, Open Doors works through local partners to provide them with livelihood assistance, practical aid, discipleship support and more.

Pray for Eritrea

- + Pray that believers in Eritrea will be able to fix their eyes fully on Christ as they undergo persecution for following Him.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/ERITREA FOR MORE.](#)

12

NIGERIA

78/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION****Leader:** President Muhammadu Buhari**Population:** 191,836,000

(95,918,000 Christians)

Main Religion: Islam, Christianity**Government:** Federal Republic**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

Brutal Violence in the North

Nigeria is a federal country with Christian majorities in the southern states and mainly Muslim majorities in the northern states. Twelve states have instituted sharia, either partially or fully, since 1999. Since Muhammadu Buhari became president in 2015, Nigeria's military campaign against Boko Haram has been relatively successful in dislodging the group from the territories it had occupied. But while Buhari has made efforts to fight Boko Haram—responsible for much of the brutal violence against Christians—the government seems reluctant to respond to the continuing violence against Christians in the Middle Belt region, caused by Hausa-Fulani Muslim herdsmen.

Through local partners, Open Doors works to assist persecuted Christians in Nigeria with emergency relief, trauma care, Bibles, discipleship training, church and building restoration, vocational training, orphan support and more.

Pray for Nigeria

- + Pray for Christians who have lost loved ones to attacks by Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, and for their persecutors as well.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/NIGERIA FOR MORE.](#)

11

LIBYA

78/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION****Leader:** Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj**Population:** 6,409,000 (20,000 Christians)**Main Religion:** Islam**Government:** Transitional**Source of Persecution:**

Islamic Oppression

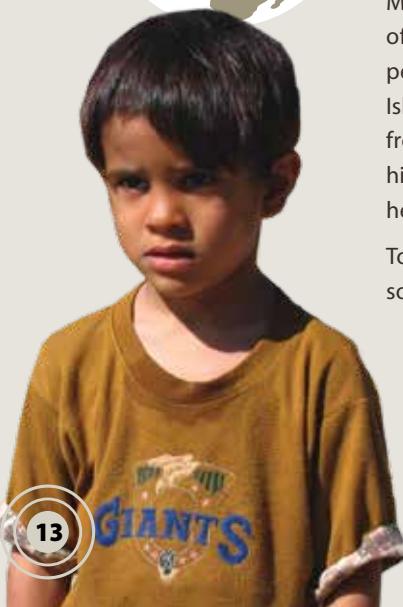
Anarchy and Persecution

Libya is still mired in the conflict and chaos that have engulfed the nation since Colonel Muammar Gadaffi's regime was toppled in 2011. The country has since been in a state of anarchy, with multiple militant groups controlling different parts of the country. The persecution situation in Libya is fueled by the state of anarchy and violent conflict in which Islamic militias are active. This results in the persecution of Libyan converts to Christianity from Islam, as well as expatriate Christians. Both groups experience extreme pressure and high levels of violence. The impunity of those who violently persecute Christians only heightens the frequency of attacks.

To assist the persecuted church in Libya, Open Doors provides training, literature distribution, socio-economic development projects, advocacy and more through local partners.

Pray for Libya

- + Pray that Libyan believers enduring extreme persecution will remain steadfast in the faith. Pray that the Lord will comfort and equip them for ministry.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/LIBYA FOR MORE.](#)

13

MALDIVES

76/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION****Leader:** President Abdulla Yameen**Population:** 376,000 (a few thousand Christians)**Main Religion:** Islam**Government:** Republic**Source of Persecution:** Islamic

Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

A False Paradise

The Maldives, world renown as a vacation destination of choice, are actually a place of intense persecution for Christians. Extreme pressure is a daily reality for the country's Christians, who is at odds with the strict form of Islam that dominates it both politically and culturally. Freedom of religion is restricted, as the "protection of religion" enumerated in the country's constitution is purely understood to mean the protection of Islam. Every Maldivian must be Muslim, according to authorities. Communities of expatriate Christians are closely monitored and have meeting restrictions, while converts to Christianity from Islam generally bear more severe persecution. The government refuses to acknowledge that converts exist, and prohibits them from having contact with (mostly Indian and Sri Lankan) expatriate Christians.

To stand with the church in the Maldives, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

Pray for Maldives

- + Pray that believers in the Maldives will have wisdom as they live out their faith. Also pray for their resilience under the ongoing stress of persecution.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/MALDIVES FOR MORE.](#)



SAUDI ARABIA

76/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud **Government:** Monarchy
Population: 32,743,000 (1,406,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression
Main Religion: Islam

Defined by Islam

Persecution in Saudi Arabia is characterized by strong societal and governmental pressure on converts to Christianity, in a country where citizens are expected to be Muslims. The number of Christian converts from Islam and other religions is increasing, along with boldness in sharing the gospel. Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world without any church buildings, an indication of the level to which both public and private life are defined by Islam. When it comes to persecution, it's especially the migrant Christians from low-income countries who are affected due to their ethnicity and low status in society. Saudi Christian converts, along with those of other nationalities, risk fierce persecution from family, society and government. They have to live out their new faith in deepest secrecy.

To stand with persecuted believers in Saudi Arabia, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

Pray for Saudi Arabia

- + Pray that Christians in Saudi Arabia will be bold in ministering to their Muslim families, neighbors and friends. Also pray that they will be comforted in the midst of persecution.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/SAUDIARABIA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/SAUDIARABIA)



UZBEKISTAN

71/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev **Government:** Authoritarian Republic
Population: 30,691,000 (350,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Post-communist Oppression, Islamic Extremism

Constant Surveillance

In Uzbekistan, converts to Christianity from Islam experience persecution in the form of pressure and violence from family, friends and local communities. Protestant Christians also suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines. Uzbek President Islam Karimov died on September 2, 2016, quickly succeeded by former Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev. Under the new government, little seems to have changed for Christians. Post-communist oppression continues, with the government bugging homes, tapping phones, infiltrating groups with spies and monitoring church services. Raiding of house meetings, confiscation of religious materials and interrogation and detention of believers also continues.

To aid persecuted Christians in this region, Open Doors provides Bible and literature distribution, biblical training, vocational training, socio-economic development projects, presence ministry and more.

Pray for Uzbekistan

- + Pray for Christians in Uzbekistan who are under constant surveillance. Pray that they will have the peace and comfort of the Holy Spirit at all times.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/UZBEKISTAN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/UZBEKISTAN)



INDIA

73/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: Prime Minister Narendra Modi **Main Religion:** Hinduism

Population: 1,342,513,000
(63,970,000 Christians)

Government: Federal Republic

Source of Persecution: Religious Nationalism

A Hindu Nation

Since May 2014, India has been governed by a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In the years since, radical Hinduism, which was already present under the previous government, has been on the rise. While the level of intolerance continues to increase, Christians are regularly attacked by Hindu extremists. The level of impunity has gone up markedly, with communities of converts to Christianity from Hinduism bearing the brunt of the persecution. They are constantly under pressure to return to their old beliefs, and are often physically assaulted, sometimes killed. Protestant Christian communities are the second main target because of their involvement in outreach activities and conversions, and they also face regular attacks by radical Hindus.

To support persecuted Christians in India, Open Doors is on the ground providing training, discipleship, education, vital relief aid and more.

Pray for India

- + Pray for Indian believers who experience both violent persecution and intense cultural pressure to return to Hinduism.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/INDIA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/INDIA)



VIETNAM

71/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: President Tran Dai Quang

Population: 95,415,000 (8,368,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Communist Oppression, Ethnic Antagonism

Main Religion: Buddhism

Restrictions and Discrimination

Christians in Vietnam are undergoing increased persecution. Historical Christian communities are facing arrests and land-grabbing by the authorities. Converts to Christianity from Buddhist or ethnic-animist backgrounds face the strongest persecution, which comes not only from the authorities, but also from families, friends and neighbors. Protestant Christian believers tend to gather in house churches, and their members face discrimination at various levels of society. The Catholic Church is by far the largest Christian community in the country, but the government sees it as being tied to foreign powers, and as a remnant from French colonial days. On November 18, 2016, the Communist government adopted a new Law on Belief and Religion, which limits freedom of religion considerably.

To stand with persecuted believers in Vietnam, Open Doors provides training for ministry workers, discipleship programs, Bible and literature distribution, literacy classes, advocacy and more.

Pray for Vietnam

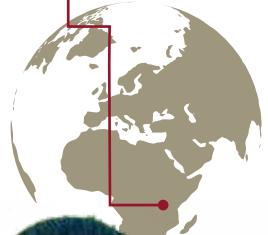
- + Pray that Christians in Vietnam from different backgrounds will find unity in Christ and support one another under persecution.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/VIETNAM FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/VIETNAM)



KENYA

68/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: President Uhuru Kenyatta

Population: 48,467,000 (39,742,900 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

Main Religion: Christianity

A Persecuted Majority

Over the past three years, the level of persecution in Kenya has been increasing, without indications of its slowing anytime soon. Kenya is a country with a Christian majority (82%) and a considerably smaller Muslim minority (10-15%). The main source of persecution is Islamic extremism—as perpetrated by al-Shabaab and other militant groups. It is in areas dominated by radical Islam that Christians are targets for persecution. Violent attacks on Christians by Islamic militants in northeastern and coastal areas have had a ripple effect on Christian communities throughout the country. To make matters worse, because of corruption in public institutions, the distribution of aid for persecution victims is often compromised.

To support persecuted Christians in Kenya, Open Doors works through local partners to provide evangelism and discipleship training, economic assistance, leadership and management training for churches, trauma care and more.

Pray for Kenya

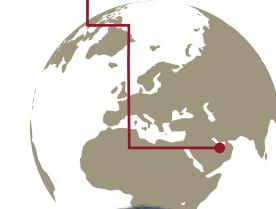
- + Pray that Kenyan Christians living in areas with large Muslim populations will have a desire to share their faith with neighbors and friends.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/KENYA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/KENYA)



QATAR

65/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani

Population: 2,338,000 (210,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism



Private Worship Only

Qatar's state religion is an extremely conservative form of Wahhabi Islam, so non-Muslims like Christians are forced to worship in private homes or designated places. Evangelism is outlawed entirely, and can result in a 10-year prison sentence. Expatriate Christians generally have more freedom to practice their faith, but evangelizing Muslims can lead to imprisonment or deportation. Apostasy (converting from Islam to another religion) is punishable by death, although no executions have been carried out since the country's independence in 1971. Since nearly everyone in the country is automatically considered either a Sunni or Shia Muslim, converting to Christianity results in pressure from relatives, community leaders and friends. Church attendance by converts is not allowed.

To stand with believers in Qatar, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

Pray for Qatar

- + Pray for Christian migrant workers to be strong witnesses for Christ, and for Christian converts who cannot share their faith with Muslim family members.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/QATAR FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/QATAR)



TURKMENISTAN

66/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



EGYPT

65/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**



Leader: President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow

Population: 5,503,000 (69,900 Christians)

Main Religion: Islam

Government: One-Party state

Source of Persecution:
Dictatorial Paranoia/Islamic Extremism

Lack of Freedom

Turkmenistan is considered one of the most restrictive places in the world. No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed. Christians are frequently branded "extremists" due to their religious activities outside state-sanctioned structures. Members of Protestant churches are often regarded as followers of an alien sect with only one goal—to spy on and destroy the current political system. Indigenous people are expected to be Muslims, and those who convert to Christianity are severely persecuted by family members, friends and the surrounding community. Some Christian converts are imprisoned in their own homes by their families and beaten until they renounce their faith.

To aid persecuted Christians in this region, Open Doors provides Bible and literature distribution, biblical training, vocational training, socio-economic development projects,

Pray for Turkmenistan

- + Pray that Christians who are wire-tapped will exercise discretion in their communications, and for converts to Christianity who are pressured to return to Islam.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/TURKMENISTAN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/TURKMENISTAN)



Leader: President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi **Government:** Republic

Population: 95,215,000 (9,521,500 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism

Main Religion: Islam

War and Islamic Extremists

President al-Sisi's authoritarian style of government has to some extent restored the rule of law in Egypt. This is not in the advantage of the country's Christian population, which suffers from violent persecution. The small but growing community of Christian converts from Islam bears the brunt of persecution, most often from family members. These believers are often kicked out of their homes or beaten when their Muslim families find out about their new faith. The large Coptic minority has traditionally been tolerated because of its historical presence and its demographic size. In recent years this has changed, however, causing historical Christian communities to be targeted as well. Some villages experience attacks by radical Muslims in which Christians are killed and churches damaged, and some believers are forced from their homes.

Through local partners, Open Doors helps persecuted Christians in Egypt through medical outreach, advocacy, ministry to widows, literacy training and more.

Pray for Egypt

- + Pray that God will bring Islamist leaders to Christ. Pray that Christians slighted or injured in social, political and legal affairs will entrust their situations to God.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/EGYPT FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/EGYPT)



ETHIOPIA

64/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**

Leader: Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn **Government:** Federal Republic
Population: 104,345,000 (65,737,400 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism/
Main Religion: Christianity (mainly Orthodox) Ecclesiastical Arrogance

A Persecuted Majority

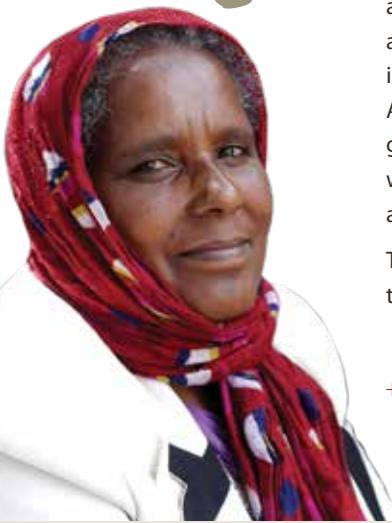
Ethiopia has a long history of both Christianity and Islam, and over time, both religions have attempted to expand their sphere of influence. Ethiopia also has many tribes, some of which are Islamic. The ruling party in the country has blocked all channels for freedom of expression and assembly, and has also tried to control all religious institutions to curb dissent. Radical Islam in neighboring Somalia and Sudan is spilling into Ethiopia, resulting in violent persecution. At the same time, some groups within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) persecute the growing number of evangelical and mainline Protestants in the country, as well as reformers within the EOC itself. Some label Protestants and Evangelicals as "newcomers," "false prophets" and "menafikan" (deniers of the Virgin Mary and the saints) to portray them as non-believers.

To help Christians in Ethiopia, Open Doors works through local partners to provide theological and discipleship training, livelihood support, emergency relief and more.

Pray for Ethiopia

- + Pray for a wave of biblical reform within the churches claiming Christ in Ethiopia, and for God to reveal the Truth to Ethiopian government officials.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/ETHIOPIA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/ETHIOPIA)



LAOS

64/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**

Leader: President Choummaly Sayasone **Government:** Communist State
Population: 7,038,000 (225,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Tribal Antagonism
Main Religion: Buddhism

The Cost of Deviation

Laos has been in the tight grip of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party since 1975. Its exclusive network of party members' families and friends adds to the pressure felt by Lao citizens, especially minorities like Christians. The country also has a complete lack of freedom of expression, let alone a free press to highlight cases of corruption and persecution. Buddhist temples are the centers of social and religious life, and most Lao men are expected to spend time serving in them. This shows how deeply ingrained Buddhism is in the thinking and culture of society. Christians refusing to participate in Buddhist practices are perceived as dangerous and a threat to traditional culture. Thus, converts are physically and verbally abused, and witnessing to Buddhist neighbors and family invites similar treatment.

Open Doors works through local partners in Laos to provide persecuted Christians with materials, training, discipleship and more.

Pray for Laos

- + Pray for Christians who have nowhere to read the Bible without being watched, and for mature Christians to take the initiative in discipling newer believers.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/LAOS FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/LAOS)



PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

64/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**

Leader: President Mahmoud Abbas **Government:** Interim Administration
Population: 4,928,000 (70,800 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism
Main Religion: Islam

Caught in the Middle

The dynamics of Christian persecution in the Palestinian Territories are complex. Arab Christians are stuck in the middle of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, their ethnicity causing many restrictions from the Israeli side and their religion putting them in a minority position within the Palestinian community. The territories are effectively under different governments. The West Bank's ruling Fatah party is more secular, and Christians enjoy several rights. In Gaza, although Christians are largely tolerated by Islamist Hamas, the rights of Christians are neither upheld nor protected. In addition to this discrimination, Christians face threats from radical Islamic vigilante groups. The total number of Christians has been decreasing in both territories due to emigration and lower birth rates. Yet the number of converts from Islam to Christianity is slowly and steadily increasing.

Open Doors provides believers in the West Bank, and those in Gaza through local partners, with Bibles and literature, socio-economic development, advocacy, safe houses and more.

Pray for Palestinian Territories

- + Pray for Christians in the Palestinian Territories to shine as lights in the midst of the conflict, and for those living in fear of repercussions for their faith to place their trust in the Lord.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/PALESTINIANTERRITORIES FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/PALESTINIANTERRITORIES)



19



BRUNEI

64/100 **VERY HIGH PERSECUTION**

Leader: Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah **Government:** Constitutional Sultanate
Population: 434,000 (54,800 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism
Main Religion: Islam

The Islamic Sultanate

Brunei has been a sultanate for more than 600 years, and all important positions are still held by the Sultan himself, including prime minister, finance minister, minister of the interior and head of religion. People deeply revere and respect him and any criticism is seen as unacceptable. Minorities like Christians, who make up 16 percent of the population, are feeling increased pressure as the Sultan gradually moves the country closer to conservative Islam. The first phase of Sharia penal code was introduced in 2014. Importing Bibles is illegal, and Christmas is banned entirely. The government incentivizes conversion to Islam with financial rewards and other benefits, with a goal of 2,000 converts per year. Even identifying as a Christian can be considered proselytizing, which is punishable by death, 30 years in prison or corporal punishment.

To stand with persecuted believers in Brunei, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

Pray for Brunei

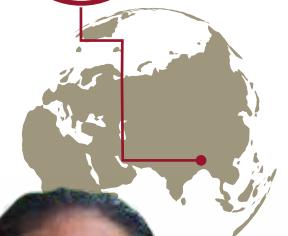
- + Pray that Christians will be able to gather in prayer and fellowship. Pray that Muslim families will encounter Christ while persecuting Christian family members.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/BRUNEI FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/BRUNEI)



26

BANGLADESH



Leader: President Abdul Hamid
Population: 164,828,000 (866,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

A Growing Minority

The constitution of Bangladesh includes freedom of religion, and there are technically no blasphemy laws or anti-conversion bills. Yet the constitution also confirms that the state religion is Islam, and the government is known to give in to Islamic pressure. There are demands to introduce Sharia law in order to show that the country belongs to the "House of Islam." As the Christian minority is growing, it faces increased restrictions, challenges and violence. This persecution is not driven by the government, but by radical Islamic groups, local religious leaders and families. The competition between the large political parties of the country is also a factor, as the government is pressured to give in to demands from Islamic groups taking to the streets in protest.

To help persecuted believers in Bangladesh, Open Doors provides Bibles, Christian literature, literacy training, socio-economic development, emergency relief and more.

Pray for Bangladesh

- + Pray that Christians who are mentally and physically abused would be granted steadfast faith, and for opportunities for believers to spend time in the Scriptures.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH)

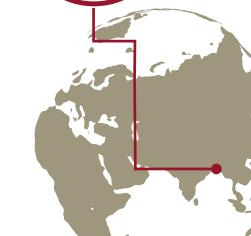
63/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Government: Parliamentary Democracy
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism

28

MYANMAR



Leader: President Thein Sein
Population: 54,836,000 (4,369,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Buddhism

Violent Attacks, Legal Opposition

In 2016, Myanmar recently saw its first free and fair elections in 25 years, which saw a landslide win for the opposition party under Aung San Suu Kyi. During the campaign and elections, the Burmese army continued violent attacks against ethnic minorities (many of them Christians) in Kachin and Shan State, even though a ceasefire agreement was signed. Indigenous Rohingya Christians face harsh persecution, as their internal displacement causes ethnic and religious tension. Additionally, an organization of Buddhist radical monks (Ma Ba Tha) continues to campaign against religious minorities, and has successfully helped introduce four laws for the "Protection of Race and Religion," building insurmountable hurdles for conversions and religiously mixed marriages.

Through local partners, Open Doors provides persecuted Christians in Myanmar with discipleship programs, livelihood support, literature distribution, ministry training and more.

Pray for Myanmar

- + Pray that persecuted Christian minorities will minister to and evangelize other persecuted minorities. Also pray that the Holy Spirit would strengthen believers.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/MYANMAR FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/MYANMAR)

61/100

TUNISIA

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Mohamed Beji Caid Essebsi **Government:** Republic
Population: 11,495,000 (23,500 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism
Main Religion: Islam

Rising Extremism

Persecution of Christians in Tunisia is on the rise, as is violent persecution specifically. The presence of Islamic extremists in the country only continues to increase. Pressure on Christians is highest within families, although it's also apparent in private, church and community activities. Violent persecution includes forced marriages, physical assaults and vandalism of Christian properties. Recent terrorist attacks aimed at tourists have Christians on edge, as they realize that more extreme persecution may be at hand. No churches have been allowed to register in the country since its independence in 1956, and registered churches face restrictions on publishing and distributing Christian texts in Arabic.

Through local partners, Open Doors serves persecuted believers in Tunisia through literature distribution, training, socio-economic development, advocacy and more.

Pray for Tunisia

- + Pray for Christians who are gripped by fears of growing extremism in their country, and for believing youth who are opposed and persecuted for rejecting Islam.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/TUNISIA FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/TUNISIA)

26

BANGLADESH

63/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Abdul Hamid
Population: 164,828,000 (866,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

A Growing Minority

The constitution of Bangladesh includes freedom of religion, and there are technically no blasphemy laws or anti-conversion bills. Yet the constitution also confirms that the state religion is Islam, and the government is known to give in to Islamic pressure. There are demands to introduce Sharia law in order to show that the country belongs to the "House of Islam." As the Christian minority is growing, it faces increased restrictions, challenges and violence. This persecution is not driven by the government, but by radical Islamic groups, local religious leaders and families. The competition between the large political parties of the country is also a factor, as the government is pressured to give in to demands from Islamic groups taking to the streets in protest.

To help persecuted believers in Bangladesh, Open Doors provides Bibles, Christian literature, literacy training, socio-economic development, emergency relief and more.

Pray for Bangladesh

- + Pray that Christians who are mentally and physically abused would be granted steadfast faith, and for opportunities for believers to spend time in the Scriptures.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH)

63/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Government: Constitutional Monarchy
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/
Main Religion: Islam

A Turning Tide

Jordanian society is multi-ethnic, as the country hosts large groups of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria. Islamic law applies to all Jordanian citizens, irrespective of their faith, and the number of Christians in the country has been declining for half a century. Until recently, Jordan was one of the most liberal countries in the region in terms of freedom of religion. However, the tide seems to be turning for Christians—especially for Christian converts from Islam who suffer the worst persecution. They often face interrogations from police or even abduction by family members. Some are physically and mentally abused, and others are institutionalized for their faith. Some Christians flee the country to avoid persecution, for fear of arrest, violence or death.

To serve persecuted Christians in Jordan, Open Doors provides training, relief, rehabilitation projects and more.

Pray for Jordan

- + Pray that the refugee crisis would allow many to hear the gospel, and especially for Muslims to be drawn to Jesus.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN)

21

27

JORDAN

63/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: King Abdullah II
Population: 7,877,000 (169,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

A Turning Tide

Jordanian society is multi-ethnic, as the country hosts large groups of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria. Islamic law applies to all Jordanian citizens, irrespective of their faith, and the number of Christians in the country has been declining for half a century. Until recently, Jordan was one of the most liberal countries in the region in terms of freedom of religion. However, the tide seems to be turning for Christians—especially for Christian converts from Islam who suffer the worst persecution. They often face interrogations from police or even abduction by family members. Some are physically and mentally abused, and others are institutionalized for their faith. Some Christians flee the country to avoid persecution, for fear of arrest, violence or death.

To serve persecuted Christians in Jordan, Open Doors provides training, relief, rehabilitation projects and more.

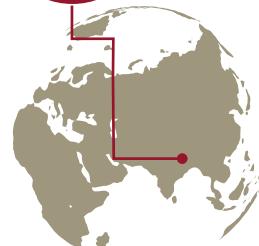
Pray for Jordan

- + Pray that the refugee crisis would allow many to hear the gospel, and especially for Muslims to be drawn to Jesus.

[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN FOR MORE.](http://ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN)

30

BHUTAN



30

Leader: King Jigme Wangchuck**Population:** 793,000 (20,000 Christians)**Main Religion:** Mahayana Buddhism

Underground Fellowship

The continuing emphasis on Buddhism as Bhutan's spiritual heritage results in persecution of the Christian minority. They continue to lack any formal status or recognition and are persecuted for leaving the Buddhist faith. All Christian fellowship must take place underground, especially in rural areas, where Buddhist monks fiercely oppose the presence of Christians.

To serve persecuted Christians in Bhutan, Open Doors works through local partners to provide persecution-preparedness programs, literature distribution, discipleship training and more.



Pray + Pray for Christians cut off from community resources, and for their Buddhist persecutors.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/BHUTAN](#)

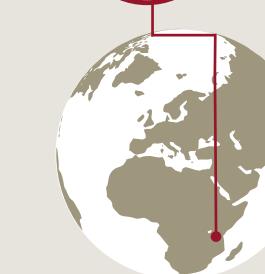
61/100

HIGH PERSECUTION**Government:** Constitutional Monarchy**Source of Persecution:**

Religious Nationalism

33

TANZANIA



33

Leader: President John Magufuli**Population:** 56,878,000 (31,739,000 Christians)**Main Religion:** Christianity, Islam

Militant Threats

The militant movements in Somalia and Kenya are presently having a serious impact on Tanzania, and causing persecution for Christian believers. Attacks on churches and individual believers continue. Christians on the island of Zanzibar are feeling heightened tension between themselves and the 96% of the population that is Muslim.

To support persecuted Christians in Tanzania, Open Doors works through local partners, providing trauma care, evangelism training, vocational assistance and more.



Pray + Pray for members of the Islamist separatist group Uamsho who orchestrate church attacks.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/TANZANIA](#)

59/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

31

MALAYSIA

60/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

31

Leader: Prime Minister Najib Razak**Population:** 31,164,000 (2,865,000 Christians)**Main Religion:** Islam**Government:** Constitutional Monarchy**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism

Fading Tolerance

Malaysia is still known as probably the best role model of a liberal and tolerant Islamic country in the world, yet this image is increasingly fading. One example of this is the recent effort to introduce sharia penal law (hudud) in the federal state of Kelantan. Some converts to Christianity are abducted or placed under house arrest until they recant.

To stand with persecuted Christians in Malaysia, Open Doors raises awareness, advocacy and prayer support.



Pray + Pray for new believers who are kicked out of their homes or sent to Islamic re-education camps.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/MALAYSIA](#)

59/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

32

MALI

Leader: President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita **Government:** Republic**Population:** 18,690,000 (448,600 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Extremism**Main Religion:** Islam

Undermining Freedom

Mali saw a swift and unfortunate rise on the World Watch List this year, going from #44 to #32. This is directly linked with Islamic radicalism that is undermining religious freedom in the country, despite a peace deal signed with the government in 2015. Christians, especially those living in areas not under government control, fear for their safety.

Open Doors serves persecuted Christians in Mali through local partners, providing Bibles and various training programs.



Pray + Pray for Christians who were displaced from their homes in northern Mali by Islamic militants.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/MALI](#)

30

60/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

34

CENTRAL AFRICAN REP.

58/100

HIGH PERSECUTION**Leader:** Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza**Population:** 5,099,000 (3,772,000 Christians)**Government:** Unitary Constitutional Republic**Source of Persecution:** Religious Nationalism

Displacement and Violence

CAR dropped a bit on the World Watch List this year, yet violence has only decreased slightly. In the northeast, Christians are forced to flee from their villages and are denied access to farming fields. While there is a significant Christian population, Fulani herdsmen and Muslim extremists create significant persecution for believers, with many Christians killed in the past year alone.

To serve persecuted Christians in CAR, Open Doors works with local partners to provide medical aid, economic rehabilitation, evangelism training and more.



Pray + Pray that believers will have opportunities to witness to Fulani herdsmen and Islamic terrorists.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/CAR](#)

32

TAJIKISTAN

58/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

35

Leader: President Emomali Rahmon **Government:** Republic**Population:** 8,858,000 (62,200 Christians)**Main Religion:** Islam

Pressure to Turn Back

Christians in Tajikistan know the pressures of daily surveillance, as government authorities heavily monitor ministry activities. Each year, more legislation is passed that restricts Christian freedoms. Churches are raided and fined, members are arrested and interrogated, and those who turn to Christ from Islam face persecution from authorities, neighbors and family.

To aid persecuted Christians in this region, Open Doors provides Bible and literature distribution, biblical training, vocational training, socio-economic development projects, presence ministry and more.



Pray + Believers in Tajikistan often sacrifice so much for their faith, pray for them to count it all joy.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/TAJIKISTAN](#)

23



36

ALGERIA

58/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika
Population: 41,064,000 (37,700 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism

Home to Extremists

Over the years, Algeria has always remained on the World Watch List. The country is home to extremists, particularly al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Almost all Christians in Algeria are from a Muslim background. The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. Catholic churches, however, conduct services without government interference, as does one Protestant church.

Through local partners, Open Doors supports believers in Algeria with training, literature distribution, socio-economic development projects, advocacy and more.

 **Pray** + Pray for Christian converts who face domestic violence and house arrest for their faith.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/ALGERIA](#)



39

CHINA

59/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Xi Jinping
Population: 1.37 billion (85,000,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Atheism

Government: Socialism
Source of Persecution: Communist Oppression

Restrictions Throughout the Country

A considerable amount of persecution affects the small group of Christian converts among the Tibetans and the Muslim Uighurs, but Christians among the main Han majority face increasing restrictions as well. The campaign of breaking down crosses in the Zhejiang province has ended, but church meetings continue to be disrupted in several provinces.

Open Doors supports Christians in China by providing biblical training, Christian literature distribution, persecution-preparedness seminars and more.

 **Pray** + Pray for Christians, who like other civilians have seen a reduction in freedom in all sectors of society in addition to persecution for their faith.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/CHINA](#)



37

TURKEY

57/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Population: 80,418,000 (187,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Parliamentary Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/
 Religious Nationalism

Nationalist Pressure

Turkey's rank on the World Watch List rose sharply this year, from #45 to #37. Persecution in Turkey is shaped by Islamic extremism and violence. Pressure on believers from Muslim backgrounds is especially acute due to Islamic Turkish nationalism.

To stand with persecuted Christians in Turkey, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

 **Pray** + Pray for those treated as traitors after embracing Christ. Pray for God to enable those whose lives are threatened to place all hope in Him.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/TURKEY](#)



40

DJIBOUTI

57/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Ismail Omar Guelleh
Population: 911,000 (11,100 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/
 Dictatorial Paranoia

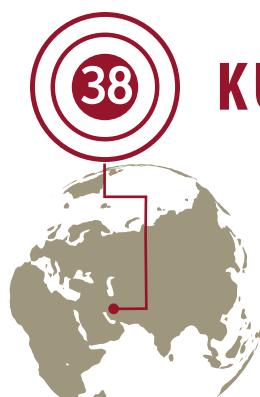
Persecution Spilling Over from Neighboring Countries

Djibouti is located in the Horn of Africa. It is surrounded by volatile countries with repressive governments like Eritrea, Somalia and Yemen. Historically, Islam is deeply embedded in Djibouti's society. Christianity has existed in Djibouti for many centuries, partly because of its ties with Ethiopia. But most Djiboutians are conservative Sunni Muslims and have strong family ties in Somalia and Yemen.

Through local partners, Open Doors serves persecuted Christians in Djibouti through Christian literature distribution, discipleship support and more.

 **Pray** + Pray for Christians who face persecution from Islamic extremists, the government and other ethnic groups.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/DJIBOUTI](#)



38

KUWAIT

57/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: Emir Sheikh Al-Sabah
Population: 4,100,000 (349,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Moderate
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/ Dictatorial Paranoia

A False Sense Of Freedom

More than half of the population is made up of immigrants, a significant number of whom are Christians. Kuwaiti society is conservative, and Islam (sharia law) prescribes a wide range of rules for personal, family and community life. The constitutional provision provides for religious freedom, yet also states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals.

To stand with persecuted Christians in Kuwait, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

 **Pray** + Pray for expatriate and migrant Christian communities that struggle to obtain registration permits.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/KUWAIT](#)



41

MEXICO

57/100

HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Enrique Peña Nieto
Population: 130,223,000 (124,869,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Christianity

Government: Federal Republic
Source of Persecution: Organized Corruption

Persecution in a Christian Nation

Organized corruption and crime affect Christians in Mexico, but particularly those who are active in ministry—a threat to drug cartels and other criminal groups. Converts from indigenous traditional beliefs to Christianity are persecuted by their families and communities.

Open Doors supports persecuted Christians in Mexico through persecution-preparedness programs, as well as training that equips Mexican Christians to help persecuted believers in their own country.

 **Pray** + Pray for persecuted believers in Mexico who are experiencing extreme levels of violence.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/MEXICO](#)



42

COMOROS

56/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Azali Assoumani
Population: 798,294 (3,300 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism

A History of Persecution

Comoros has never fallen off the WWL. The Sunni majority in Comoros has adopted a constitution declaring Islam as the state religion. Some legal provisions for religious freedom exist, but benefit foreigners more than native Christians. Proselytization for any religion except Islam is illegal. Converts from Islam can be prosecuted and face severe discrimination.

To support persecuted Christians in Comoros, Open Doors works with local partners, providing ministry, leadership and business training and other programs.

Pray + There has recently been an increase in what is usually sparse violent persecution in Comoros. Pray for the safety of Christians in this nation.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/COMOROS



43

KAZAKHSTAN

56/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan
Population: 18,064,000 (4,627,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Parliamentary Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/
 Religious Nationalism

Every Form of Persecution

Communities of converts to Christianity from Islam in Kazakhstan bear the brunt of persecution, both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are active in evangelism and suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines, especially when their churches have not been registered.

To aid persecuted Christians in this region, Open Doors provides Bible and literature distribution, biblical training, vocational training, socio-economic development projects, presence ministry and more.

Pray + Pressure from family and community remains very high in Kazakhstan. Pray that persecuted believers would stand strong in spite of this.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/KAZAKHSTAN



44

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: Emir Sheikh Al-Sabah
Population: 9,398,000 (1,220,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Government: Moderate
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism/ Dictatorial Paranoia

Freedom with Contradictions

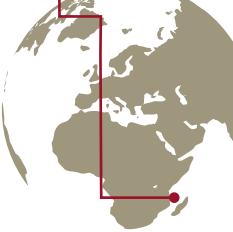
All decisions about political leadership rest with the dynastic rulers of the seven emirates and there is no space or recognition of political parties. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is also full of contradictions: It provides for religious freedom but states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. Apostasy is punishable by death.

To stand with persecuted Christians in the UAE, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

Pray + Christian converts from Islam face the most persecution of any group in the UAE. Pray for their safety.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/UAE

27



45

SRI LANKA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Maithripala Sirisena
Population: 20,300,000
 $(1,400,000 \text{ Christians})$

Main Religion: Buddhism
Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Religious Nationalism

Violence in a Buddhist Nation

Radical Buddhist groups are still very much alive, but have currently paused their actions against religious minorities. Nevertheless, mobs (often led by Buddhist monks) have continued to disrupt church services. A re-emphasis on Buddhism as the predominant religion is apparent in the new constitution, while Christians and other minorities are often victims of violence from members of the army.

Open Doors serves persecuted Christians in Sri Lanka by providing Christian literature distribution, income generation projects, emergency aid and more.

Pray + Pray that Christians would start to receive more protection from the government as religious minorities.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/SRILANKA



46

INDONESIA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Joko Widodo
Population: 263,510,000
 $(31,925,000 \text{ Christians})$

Main Religion: Islam
Government: Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism

The Threat of ISIS

Claims that Indonesia would be unaffected by ISIS (due to its special brand of moderate and diverse Islam) were shattered when an attack on a café in Jakarta in January 2016 claimed seven lives. Radical Islamic groups continue to pose serious challenges, especially when connected to international movements. The government is taking the fight against extremists seriously.

Open Doors supports persecuted believers in Indonesia through emergency relief, persecution-preparedness programs, income generation projects and more.

Pray + There have recently been several churches attacked, so pray for the safety of believers as they attend church.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/INDONESIA



47

MAURITANIA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz
Population: 4,266,000
 $(5,000 \text{ Christians})$

Main Religion: Islam
Government: Islamic Republic
Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism

Poverty and Persecution

Mauritania is a self-proclaimed Islamic Republic, and has been under military rule for three decades. Several Islamist groups are politically active in the country. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has posed a challenge to the Mauritanian government since 2005. Mauritania is one of the world's poorest countries.

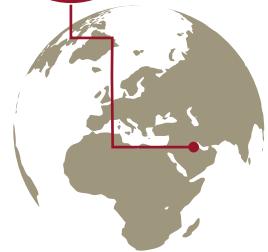
Open Doors works through local partners to provide persecuted Christians in Mauritania with training, literature, socio-economic development, advocacy and more.

Pray + Since there are so few believers, Christians often feel isolated. Pray for their strength.

LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/MAURITANIA

48

BAHRAIN



54/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa
Population: 1,419,000 (186,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

Evangelism Is Illegal

A considerable number of Christians from other countries (mainly from South Asia) work and live in Bahrain, and are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship. Proselytizing Muslims is illegal. While the constitution includes provisions for religious freedom, they are misleading, as religious beliefs cannot violate established culture or customs. Because Christian beliefs differ from Islam, they are effectively outlawed.

To stand with persecuted Christians in Bahrain, Open Doors raises prayer support and awareness.

 **Pray** + Pray for wisdom as Christians strive to share the gospel with their neighbors.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/BAHRAIN](http://ODUSA.ORG/BAHRAIN)

49

OMAN



53/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: Sultan Qaboos bin Said
Population: 4,741,000 (204,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Islam

A Constitution of False Hope

Oman is the country of Ibadi Islam, a sect which is supposed to be more peaceful than mainstream Sunni or Shia. Yet the constitution in the country is much like those of surrounding nations: promoting religious freedom, but only so long as religious expression meets cultural expectations. This causes the persecution of Christians, whose beliefs fail to mesh with the majority.

To stand with persecuted Christians in Oman, Open Doors raises awareness and prayer support.

 **Pray** + Christian converts from Islam suffer the most in this country. Pray for their strength in spite of the persecution they face.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/OMAN](http://ODUSA.ORG/OMAN)

50

COLOMBIA



53/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

Leader: President Juan Manuel Santos
Population: 49,068,000 (46,657,000 Christians)
Main Religion: Christianity

Freedom with Contradictions

Large areas of Colombia are under the control of criminal organizations, drug cartels, revolutionaries and paramilitary groups who persecute Christians, often violently. Both violence and persecution generally go unpunished. All inhabitants of Colombia suffer from the conflict that has lasted for decades, but Christians are especially affected.

Open Doors helps persecuted Christians in Colombia by providing construction of Christian schools, emergency relief aid, curriculum development and more.

 **Pray** + Pray for Christians who face violence from rebel groups.

[LEARN MORE AT ODUSA.ORG/COLOMBIA](http://ODUSA.ORG/COLOMBIA)

WANT TO GO EVEN DEEPER?

Open Doors USA invites you to enter into the story of the persecuted church as you stand with them in prayer, tangible support and advocacy.



Since 1955, Open Doors has worked in the world's most oppressive countries, empowering Christians who are persecuted for their beliefs. Today, Open Doors serves persecuted Christians in more than 60 countries through on-the-ground ministry, listening to their needs and meeting them accordingly.

The top requests from persecuted Christians are for prayer and the knowledge that they aren't alone. Open Doors comes alongside them as a physical reminder that the Body of Christ is with them in the midst of persecution. Depending on the needs of persecuted Christians in each country, Open Doors provides prayer support, advocacy and holistic aid in the form of Bibles, emergency response, rebuilding of churches, trauma counseling, ministry training and more.



Check out *The Ripple Effect*, a free new series from Open Doors that tackles the difficult subject of Christian persecution head-on. As you learn, engage and pray through six modules, you'll grow in your faith and understanding of what our persecuted brothers and sisters face around the world.

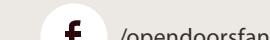
Even the smallest of actions can impact the lives of persecuted Christians and influence the world for Jesus Christ.

Create your own ripple effect—visit RippleEffectSeries.com

Social Media

To stay up to date with the latest on Christian persecution, including prayer updates, videos and breaking news, be sure to follow Open Doors USA on social media.

Be on the lookout for our Facebook Live broadcasts, coming straight to your computer or mobile device!



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Want to Learn More?

For prayer updates, news, stories, videos and ways to get involved, visit us at ODUSA.org



OpenDoors

Serving persecuted Christians worldwide

Exploring What the Bible Says

Use the following Scripture references to answer the following questions:

Matthew 5:10-12

Mark 13:9-13

Romans 8:31-39

Matthew 10:16-23

Luke 21:10-19

1 Peter 4:12-16

- 1) Will all Christians face persecution?

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- 2) What comfort does God give us in the Bible about facing persecution?

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- 3) Must we respect the government when it persecutes Christians?

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- 4) Should we allow other religions the freedom to practice? Should we tolerate idolatry and false religions?

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Spheres of Life and Christian Persecution

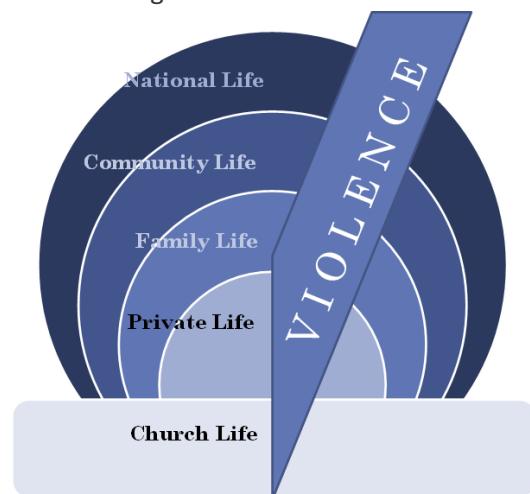
This material is taken from <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/spheres-of-life-surveyed-by-the-world-watch-list-2/> and also from <http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/methodology/>

The World Watch List methodology has defined the ‘five spheres concept’ to track the expressions of persecution in different areas of life. These five spheres express the *squeeze* (pressure) in each sphere of life. A sixth building block expresses the *smash* (plain violence), which potentially cuts across all five spheres of life.

Private life

Private life is defined as the inner life of a Christian, the *forum internum*, the freedom of thought and conscience.

The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free has a Christian been to relate to God one-on-one in his/her own space?” This is not limited to the private home but can also apply to prison, for example, or a walk in the woods. This is irrespective of who the agent challenging this freedom might be.



[1<http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/methodology/>](http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/methodology/)

The questions deal with conversion, private worship, possession of religious material, freedom of expression, e.g. in spoken word and writing, through images and symbols, access to information and media, privately sharing a belief with others, freedom of private assembly,

freedom of private communication, and freedom of movement.

Family life

Family life is defined as pertaining to the nuclear and extended family of a Christian. The guiding WWL question asked is: “How free has a Christian been to live his/her Christian convictions within the circle of the family, and how free have Christian families been to conduct their family life in a Christian way?” It also asks: “How much have Christians been discriminated against, harassed or in any other way persecuted by their own families?”

The questions deal with the forced allocation of religious identity, registration of civil affairs, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, indoctrination of children, harassment of or discrimination against children, separation of families, isolation of converts, pressure to divorce, custody of children, and inheritance rights.

Community life

Community life is defined as the interaction of Christians with their respective local communities beyond the family level and below any supra-local level. This community life includes the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order. A mobile person can have several local communities regarding different aspects of community life, e.g. origin or residence in one place and education or work in another.

Handout 2 – Christian Persecution

The guiding WWL question asked is: "How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions within the local community (beyond church life), and how much pressure has the community put on Christians by acts of discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?"

The questions deal with threat or obstruction to daily life, dress codes, monitoring of Christians, abduction and forced marriage, access to community resources, community ceremonies, participation in communal institutions and forums, pressure to renounce faith, access to health care, access to and disadvantages in education, discrimination in employment and obstruction in business, policing issues (fines, interrogations, forced reporting), and other ways of marginalization of Christians.

National life

National life is defined as the interaction between Christians and the nation they live in. This includes rights and laws, the justice system, national public administration and public life. The guiding WWL question asked is: "How free have Christians been individually and collectively to live their Christian convictions beyond their local community, and how much pressure has the legal system put on Christians, and how much pressure have agents of supra-local national life put on Christians by acts of misinformation, discrimination, harassment or any other form of persecution?"

The questions deal with national ideology, constitution, registration of religion in IDs, conscientious objection, travel within a country and abroad, discrimination by authorities, barring from public office or professional progress, policy interference with businesses, expression of opinion in public, Christian civil society organizations and political parties, reporting about religious or social conflicts, smear campaigns, toleration of public disrespect, religious symbols, blasphemy accusations, impunity, equal treatment in court, monitoring of trials.

Church life

Church life is defined as the collective exercise by Christians of freedom of thought and conscience, particularly as regards uniting with fellow Christians in worship, life, service and public expression of their faith without undue interference. It also pertains to properties held or used by Christians for these purposes.

The guiding WWL question asked is: "How have restrictions, discrimination, harassment or other forms of persecution infringed upon these rights and this collective life of Christian churches, organizations and institutions?"

The questions deal with the hindrance in gathering of Christians, registration of churches, monitoring or closing of unregistered churches, church building and renovation, expropriation and non-return, disturbance or disruption of services, prevention of activities inside or outside churches or among youth, acceptance of converts, monitoring of preaching and published materials, election and training of leaders, harassment of leaders or their families, Bibles and other religious materials and their printing, importing, selling or dissemination, and confiscation, broadcasting and Internet use, interference with ethical convictions (regarding family and marriage) and personnel policy of Christian institutions, Christian civil society organizations and social activities, foreign Christian workers, and the denouncing of government persecution.

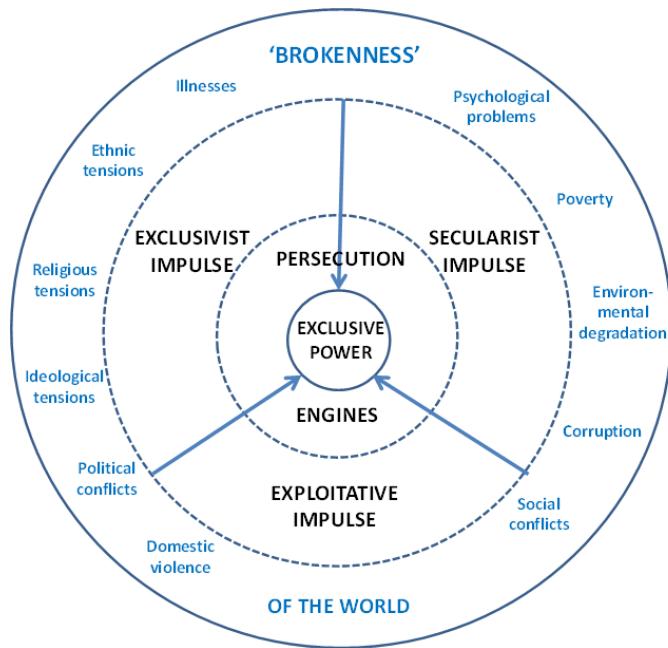
Plain violence

Plain violence is defined as the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily harm to Christians or serious damage to their property. The guiding WWL question asked is: "How many cases of such violence have there been?"

The questions deal with the killing of Christians, serious damage to communal Christian buildings, detention without trial, jailing, abduction, rape and sexual harassment, forced marriage, other physical or mental harm, serious damage to the homes and businesses of Christians, and eviction and flight.

The Pattern of Persecution

Diagrams are taken from <http://www.opendoorsca.org/world-watch-list/methodology/>



fuels the engines of communist oppression and aggressive secularism. The exploitative impulse fuels totalitarian paranoia and organized corruption.

These engines would not get anywhere unless there were drivers. These can be any number of people or groups and are often more than one. Drivers include: government officials at any level, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, fanatical movements, normal citizens, extended family, political parties, revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, organized crime groups, and multilateral organizations.

How does persecution happen?

Well, it first of all results from sin and brokenness of the world. This is represented by the outer circle and creates very complex circumstances.

This brokenness emerges into the open and against Christians through various impulses. There are three different impulses measured by the WWL.

These impulses are the fuel for several different persecution engines. The tribal impulse provides fuel for the following persecution engines: Islamic extremism, other religious militancy, tribal antagonism, ecclesiastical arrogance. The secular impulse

Underlying impulses	Persecution engine
Tribal impulse	Islamic extremism
	Other religious militancy
	Tribal antagonism
	Ecclesiastical arrogance
Secular impulse	Communist oppression
	Aggressive secularism
Exploitative impulse	Totalitarian paranoia
	Organized corruption

Persecution Profile

Your task is to choose a country that is ranked on the World Watch List and to complete a Persecution Profile of this country to help raise awareness of what faces Christians in this country.

Together with your teacher you will determine the format that this project will take.

The Persecution Profile should include:

- Demographic statistics
- A discussion on the country's ranking on the WWL. (Previous WWL rankings can be obtained via the interactive map at <https://www.worldwatchmonitor.org/2016/01/2016-world-watch-list-drawn-from-world-headlines/>; by clicking on a country you can retrieve the 2014-2016 WWL rankings.) Note well, that a drop in rankings doesn't mean they're friendlier towards Christians – it just means there are more countries more hostile. For example, China in 2017 is #39 but in 2016 was #33. Their level of hostility towards Christians remained at the same intensity level over the two years.
- Include personal stories of Christians that are available on the website links provided below.
- Provide a detailed look at how persecution is experienced by Christians in that country in each of the different spheres.

Resources: The following resources are excellent starting points that will help you create your Persecution Profile of your chosen country. Be sure to include personal stories that help illustrate your points.