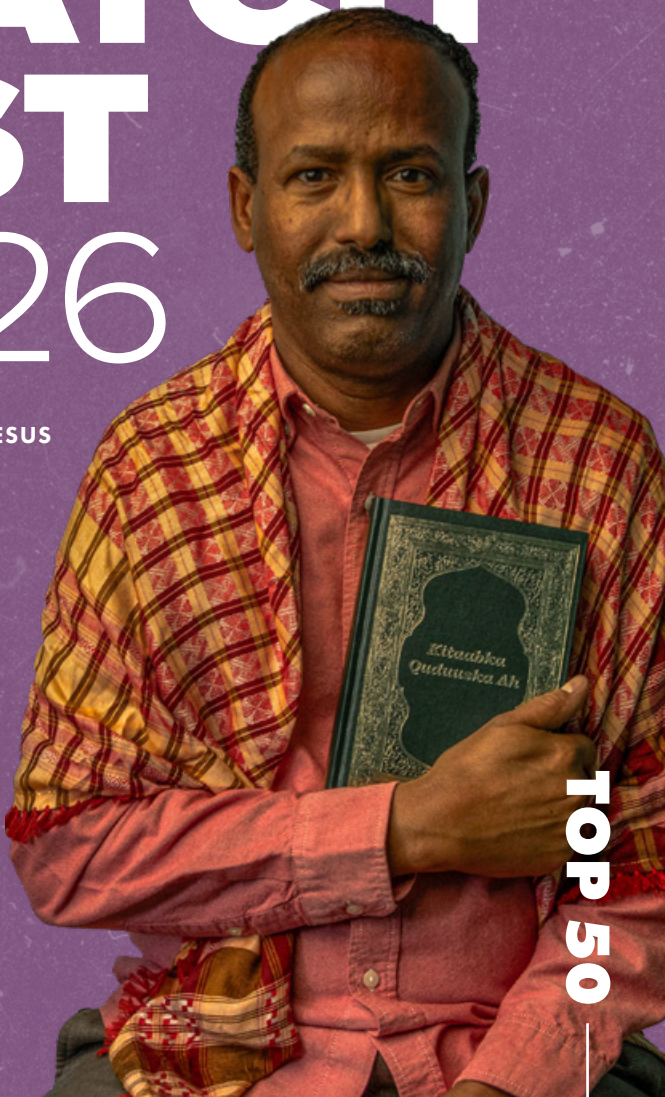
Open Doors

WORLD WATCH LIST 2026

WHERE FOLLOWING JESUS COSTS THE MOST



TOP 50

IMPOSSIBLE FAITH STORIES



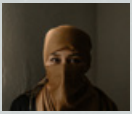
"IF YOU COULD SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN MY COUNTRY, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE ANY DOUBTS AGAIN."

Read about impossible faith in North Korea, page 8



"THERE IS NO PLACE WHERE CHRIST CANNOT BE FOLLOWED. IT'S IMPOSSIBLE."

The joy and the danger of following Jesus in Somalia, page 11



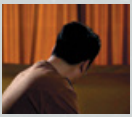
"FAITH FINDS ITS WAY IN, EVEN IN THE DARKEST TIMES."

How your prayers encourage Khada* in Afghanistan, page 18



"WE FEEL UNSAFE HERE, BUT WE CHOOSE TO STAY."

The courage of a pastor in the chaos of Myanmar's civil war, page 25



"YOUR PRAYERS ARE LIKE AN ANGEL'S EMBRACE!"

Da Wei* disciples the next generation of believers in China, page 27



"STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING, OR WE WILL KILL YOU."

Despite the threats, Yasin* in Iraq still shares the gospel, page 28



"PRAYER NEEDS PATIENCE. GOD ANSWERS IN HIS TIME."

Meet the pastor from Laos who oversees 50 house churches, page 40



"I THOUGHT OF YOU AS A DISGRACE – THAT'S WHY I TRIED TO KILL YOU WITH A SPEAR."

The incredible faith-filled friendship of Bulbula* and Adam,* page 51



"I PRAY FOR THOSE WHO KILLED HIM."

Samir shares the moving story of his martyred son, page 57



"I FORGIVE YOU FOR SHOOTING ME."

How Pastor Roman*'s last prayer changed the minds of his attackers, page 60



"These people of Boko Haram came to impose their Islamic religion on us. But we are, and will be, Christians." – Juldé, a widow from Cameroon

THE ENEMIES OF CHRISTIANITY HAVE ONE AIM: TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO BE A CHRISTIAN

So, they pass laws and spread rumors; they close down churches, put pastors in prison and drive Christians out of their homes. They do everything they can to spread fear and hatred — to scorch the earth so badly that the seeds of faith simply cannot grow.

There's only one problem with this approach: it never works.

Against the odds, in refugee camps and prison cells, in houses and apartments, faith finds a way. Tiny as a mustard seed, silent as yeast, Christianity can grow anywhere.

Silence the sermons, and Christians still talk about Jesus. Close the churches, and Christians still find places to meet. Ban the Bible? They memorize it. Put pastors in prison? They share the gospel between the bars.

This book is a gateway to this world – a world of impossible faith.

Because with man things might be impossible, but with God it's a different story entirely.

MAPPING THE WORLD OF THE

WORLD WATCH LIST 2026



388 MILLION

More than 388 million Christians face high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. That's one in seven of all Christians worldwide.



24 YEARS

North Korea is number 1 for the 24th time.



67,843

Christians were beaten, threatened or physically or psychologically abused

Some **163** of these were in Mexico

224,129

Christians were forced to leave their homes and go into hiding or leave the country

An estimated **1,500** of these were in Myanmar

25,794

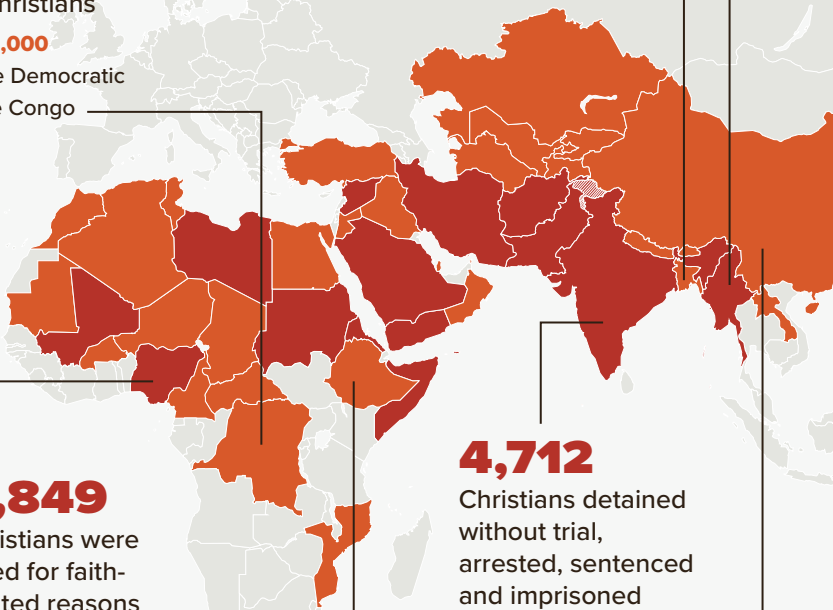
attacks were made on Christian homes, shops and businesses

Some **25** of these incidents took place in Bangladesh

5,202

Christians were sexually assaulted, harassed or forced to marry non-Christians

An estimated **1,000** incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



4,849

Christians were killed for faith-related reasons

3,490 of these deaths were in Nigeria

4,712

Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced and imprisoned

Over **1,600** of these incidents took place in India

3,302

Christians were abducted

16 of these abductions took place in Ethiopia

3,632

Churches or public Christian properties attacked or closed

Around **1,000** of these took place in China

WHAT MAKES PERSECUTION POSSIBLE?

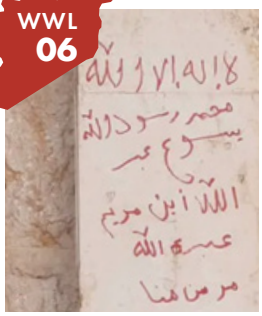
Sometimes we read stories of persecution in places like India and China and think, "How is this even possible? How do they get away with it?"

Persecution happens for a wide variety of reasons. But a look through the World Watch List reveals that there are some key factors that make it possible, even easy, for the enemies of Christianity to attack the church.

WAR AND ANARCHY

Perhaps the biggest enabler of persecution is chaos and anarchy. The breakdown of state authority creates lawless zones where criminal gangs and religious extremists can attack Christians secure in the knowledge that they will not face any consequences. This is the case in countries like **Yemen (3)**, **Sudan (4)**, **Libya (9)** and **Myanmar (14)**.

WWL 06



Graffiti reading "there will be no polytheists left in Syria by God's will. Our meeting is near, you pigs of the cross."

The most striking example this year is **Syria (6)**, where the fall of the Assad regime has resulted in a surge of violence, moving the country up 12 places in the list.

Many countries – especially those in sub-Saharan Africa – have a kind of split personality. They contain both regions where Christians are persecuted and regions where Christians live in relative tranquility. **Nigeria (7)**, for example, is home to Africa's largest Christian population. But it is also the country where Christians face the most violence. The reason is that, as in a lot of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Christians in the north of this vast country live in an entirely different situation to those in the south. In the south, there are mega-churches; in the north, thousands have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes and live in camps.

DICTATORSHIPS AND AUTHORITARIANISM

Christians are citizens of the kingdom of God. To many dictators and leaders, the idea of allegiance to a different kingdom, or to a different leader, is intolerable. These regimes equate religious independence with political dissent. In these places, persecution operates within a wider suffocation of rights, reinforced by media censorship, weak courts and oppressive surveillance. Nowhere exemplifies this more than **North Korea (1)**, where the leader is worshipped like a god and Christians are characterized in state propaganda as traitors and spies. Political authoritarianism has also intensified in

Cuba (24) and **Nicaragua (32)**. In September 2025, the government in **China (17)** published a list of 18 rules that, among other things, require religious leaders to support the Chinese Communist Party as well as forbid fundraising, outreach to youth or distribution of religious apps and publications.



CRIMINALITY AND GREED

Persecution sometimes comes down to some very basic things: greed, corruption and crime. Jesus warned his followers that they would be persecuted because they were like Him, so any demonstration of Christlikeness is likely to provoke opposition. In Central and South America, organized crime is one of the biggest drivers of persecution. In **Mexico (30)**, warring gangs and cartels often target church leaders and Christian organizations, especially those who attempt to broker peace or who provide assistance to victims. Persecution often has mixed motives. It can be allied with poverty, food scarcity or competition for land driven by climate change. Whatever the motivation, though, Christians make easy targets.

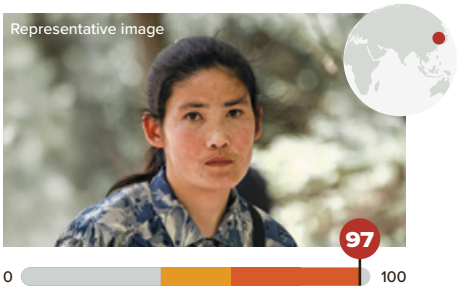
NATIONALISM AND HATRED

The world is becoming more partisan, more divided. At a national level more and more countries are deciding that religion is part of their national identity. To be an Indian is to be a Hindu. In the **Maldives (19)**, it is assumed that all citizens are Muslim. This operates at the local level as well. Converting from the traditional religion or from the “clan” or “family” faith is seen as a betrayal of their heritage. In **Somalia (2)**, converts from Islam are seen as traitors to clan and identity and can fall victim to localized, community-driven violence, including even public execution. In **India (12)**, the merging of the Indian nationality with the Hindu religion has led to a number of states imposing anti-conversion laws.

THE IMPOSSIBLE FAITH OF THE CHURCH

Perhaps the most potent and powerful reason for persecution is the faith of the church itself. The fact is that, in all these countries, the church is still present and alive. (In some places, it’s even growing.) Despite the best efforts of dictators, extremists, secret policemen and party officials, churches continue to meet, scripture continues to be shared and the gospel is still proclaimed. Throughout these countries, churches continue to show remarkable resilience and creativity in how they witness for Jesus. The enemies of Christianity will still try to make life impossible for Christians. But it won’t work. Because ours is an impossible faith. And nothing is impossible for God.

1 NORTH KOREA



POPULATION
26.3 million / 400,000 Christians
LEADER
Kim Jong-un
PERSECUTION SCORE 97 (-1) ↓

If you are found to be a Christian in North Korea, you and your family could be immediately executed or sent to a terrible labor camp – forever.

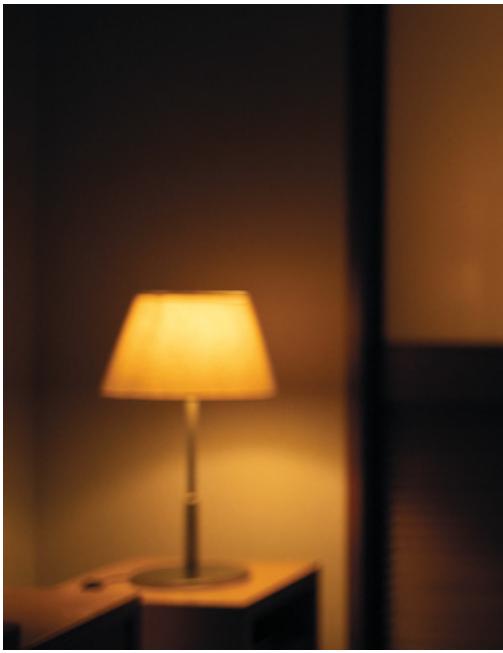
The "anti-reactionary thought law," introduced in 2020, made it even clearer that being a Christian and owning a Bible is a serious crime.

North Koreans may only pay homage to the Kim regime, not God. Christian gatherings must be completely secret; a neighbor could inform on you with devastating results.

Open Doors seeks to strengthen secret North Korean believers through networks outside the country. This includes emergency relief aid, Christian materials, Christian radio broadcasts and shelter and training for those who've fled.

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would change the hearts of Kim Jong-un and his family
- For the small, secret gatherings that make up North Korea's courageous church
- That believers will find food, and have opportunity to care for others in need.



How do you tell your children about Jesus when doing so can bring imprisonment – or even death? That's the impossible challenge facing Christians in North Korea, but astonishingly, secret believers like Young-Mi* find ways.

In a neighboring country, an Open Doors fieldworker met with Young-Mi, who explained how she shared the gospel with her children. "She couldn't use the term 'God' at all," reports the fieldworker. "But she made it clear that, whenever they're in trouble, they can find help from the One who is in heaven. She said that she hoped her children would have faith in Christ one day, just like she has faith in God."

Young-Mi asked the fieldworker for more teaching about Christianity. "I taught her about living as a child of God. The bottom line was about reading the Bible and prayer.



YOUNG-MI

01 NORTH KOREA

She was thankful to know that she can pray anytime and anywhere. I could see that she was very focused. Before she left, I prayed for her future steps and her family."

"IF YOU COULD SEE WHAT GOD IS DOING IN MY COUNTRY, YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE ANY DOUBTS AGAIN"

"In such a controlled and dangerous environment, Christian parents face heartbreaking choices," explains Brother Simon*, Open Doors coordinator for North Korean ministry. "Most are too afraid to speak openly about their faith, even to their children. Instead, they focus on instilling Christian values, like kindness and generosity, hoping that one day they'll be able to share the gospel safely."

DID YOU KNOW?

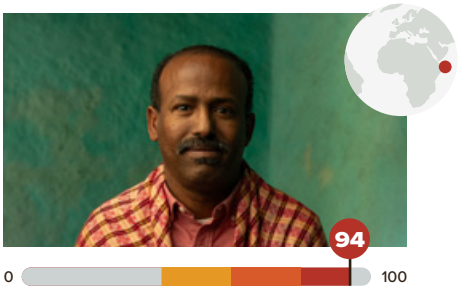
Many North Koreans encounter Jesus through signs and wonders. "If you could see what God is doing in my country, you would never have any doubts again," says a North Korean escapee. "The Holy Spirit is at work, thanks to your prayers."

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

Pray for wisdom, courage and protection as Christian parents seek to share their faith with their children.

*Names changed and representative image used for security reasons

2 SOMALIA



POPULATION
19.3 million / Hundreds of Christians
LEADER
Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre
PERSECUTION SCORE 94 (no change) ↔

Anybody becoming a Christian in Somalia faces danger on all sides: from the authorities, from your clan and from anti-Christian extremists.

It's illegal for a Muslim to become a Christian. Christians have no legal protection and can be harassed and intimidated by the authorities. Leaving Islam is also seen as seriously dishonoring your family and clan: they may disown, attack or even kill you.

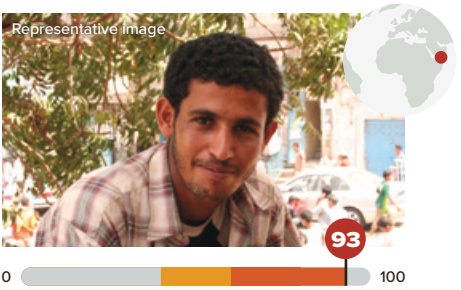
The militant extremist group Al-Shabaab has become more dominant in certain areas. They aim to eradicate Christianity, openly executing suspected believers.

> **Open Doors supports Somali believers across the Horn of Africa through discipleship training and by equipping them to cope with severe persecution.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For Christians' protection from Al-Shabab extremists
- That Somali believers would know they aren't alone, even though they worship in secret
- For healing for the minds and hearts of traumatized Somalis.

3 YEMEN



POPULATION
36 million / A small number of Christians
LEADER
Chairman Rashad al-Alimi
PERSECUTION SCORE 93 (-1) ↓

Yemeni Christians are very vulnerable in the chaos of war and humanitarian crisis.

Most have converted from Islam and must practice their faith in absolute secrecy or risk a death sentence. Those who aren't legally punished are likely to be disowned and persecuted by their families and communities.

Last year, Western airstrikes were framed by the Houthis as "Christian aggression," pushing believers further underground. Most foreign Christians have now fled Yemen. But many Yemeni believers bravely want to stay and serve their people. In fact, the small church is steadily growing.

> **Open Doors supports persecuted Christians in Yemen by raising prayer, distributing aid, training pastors and believers, giving livelihood support and offering shelter and protection.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That peace will finally come to Yemen
- For courage and hope for the Yemenis who risk their lives to follow Jesus
- That secret churches will be able to meet, and leaders find the strength to keep serving.



AWEIS

02 SOMALIA

When Aweis and a group of believers in Somalia encountered extreme persecution from Islamist militants, they began getting dreams and visions. "We'd emerge stronger," says Aweis of the messages. "God was guiding us. It made us bolder."

Eventually, only two of the group remained, including Aweis. The rest paid the ultimate price for their faith.

"WHEN I SEE HOW THE HOLY SPIRIT IS LEADING THIS SMALL CHURCH, IT GIVES ME SPECIAL JOY"

Aweis knew the dangers of following Jesus in Somalia the moment he showed his father a New Testament, which he obtained after becoming curious about Christianity. "I cannot stop you from reading your Bible," his father said. "But if you become a Christian, I'll be the one to kill you."

Aweis later gave his life to Jesus. "I was cut off," he says. "In Somali culture, you're nothing if you're on your own." For seven years, he walked alone in his faith, until he discovered another Christian. Gradually, their group grew – until it was devastated by persecution.

Today, despite huge danger, Aweis continues to serve Somali believers across the Horn of Africa. "When I see how the Holy Spirit is leading this small church, it gives me special joy," he says.

"In Somalia, it seems impossible to become a Christian – the persecution is so intense that, when people count the cost, some may decide not to risk it," he explains. "Those who take the plunge know they'll lose so much. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, they do it."

DID YOU KNOW?

"There is no open church anywhere in Somalia or the Horn of Africa," explains Zakariya*, who helps support Somali believers. "Where the Somali church is growing, it is invisible."

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

"Pray that we thrive amidst persecution, that we become more Christlike," asks Aweis. "So, when persecutors see us, they think, 'Wow, they're so different — we want to be like them.'"

4 SUDAN



POPULATION
50.6 million / 2 million Christians
LEADER
Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan
PERSECUTION SCORE 92 (+2) ↑

Sudan's civil war has created the world's largest humanitarian crisis. The Christian community is hungry, on the run and facing strong persecution at the same time.

Sudan's brief period of religious freedom has been rowed back, and oppressive "morality policies" are back in force. Christians can face physical punishment to convert to Islam, with church leaders arrested. Many church buildings have been closed, bombed or taken over by militia groups.

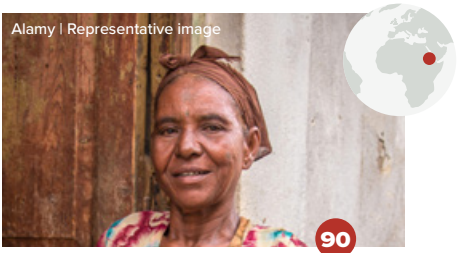
New Christians face rejection from their families and violence from Islamic extremist groups. In a lawless vacuum, they have no protection.

> **Open Doors partners in Sudan strengthen Christians through persecution survival programs, discipleship training and economic empowerment projects.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For a peaceful resolution to Sudan's brutal civil war and for a future for the church
- For protection over believers who've fled their homes and those who've stayed
- That Sudanese Christians can show that Jesus' peace is a better way.

5 ERITREA



POPULATION
3.9 million / 1.7 million Christians
LEADER
President Isaias Afwerki
PERSECUTION SCORE 90 (+1) ↑

In Eritrea, following Jesus comes with a constant risk of being thrown into a brutal prison – perhaps forever.

Christians who worship outside the state-sanctioned churches face surveillance, violent police raids and indefinite imprisonment – often in shocking conditions. New converts face rejection by their communities as well.

Many Eritreans are forced into military service with no end date. Christians face a devastating dilemma: endure persecution and forced service, or flee the country through routes marked by trafficking, torture and danger.

> **Open Doors partners in Eritrea provide survival training and discipleship.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For hope and freedom for the many imprisoned Christians
- That God will provide for the daily needs of Christians arrested or detained for their faith
- That President Afwerki's heart would be turned away from oppression and toward the love of Jesus.



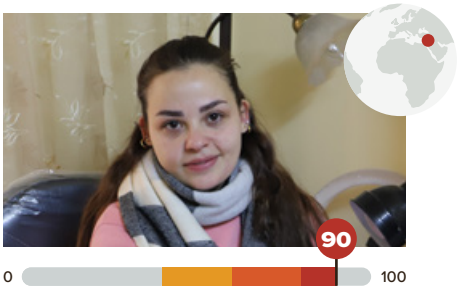
DEMOLISHED CHURCH / SUDAN
The remains of a demolished Pentecostal church in Khartoum. Authorities claimed it did not comply with regulations. No notice was given, and no one was allowed to remove anything from the building.



RIFKATU* / NIGERIA
Rifkatu was kidnapped and terribly abused. The patient, loving care at the Open Doors trauma center gives her and other women a path toward healing and hope.

*Name changed for security reasons

6 SYRIA



POPULATION
25.4 million / 579,000 Christians
LEADER
President Ahmed al-Sharaa
PERSECUTION SCORE 90 (+12) ↑

Syrian Christians face an uncertain future since the fall of Assad in 2024.

Syria is now mostly controlled by forces led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, an Islamist group with roots in Al Qaeda.

Political instability has led to deadly clashes, with Christians caught in the crossfire. Despite their ancient history, Syrian Christians are often associated with the West, putting them at risk of discrimination and violence. The so-called Islamic State's attack on a Damascus church in June 2025 shook the Christian community: 30 worshippers were killed and nearly 60 more injured.

> **Open Doors local partners in Syria help strengthen believers by providing Bibles and Christian literature, discipleship training, trauma care, relief aid, microloans and other socioeconomic help.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the shocked and frightened victims of the Damascus church attack
- That Christians living with constant uncertainty will know God is their rock
- That new believers rejected by Muslim families find love and fellowship.

7 NIGERIA



POPULATION
234.6 million / 107.3 million Christians
LEADER
President Bola Tinubu
PERSECUTION SCORE 89 (+1) ↑

For several years, Nigeria has been the most violent place in the world for Christians. Twelve northern states have implemented Sharia (Islamic law), and Christians live as second-class citizens.

Violent Islamist militant groups – like Boko Haram and ISWAP – operate across northern and central Nigeria. They abduct women and girls for forced marriage or sexual slavery, beat and kill men or hold both to ransom.

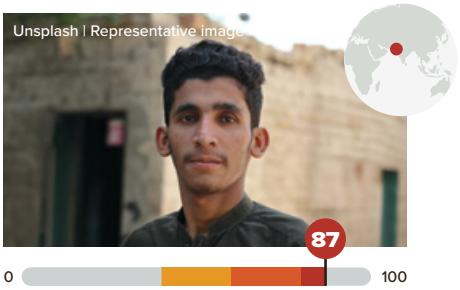
In Nigeria's Middle Belt, militants violently attack Christian farmers. Violence is now spilling into southern states. Thousands of Nigerian Christians were displaced in 2025.

> **Open Doors partners in Nigeria provide trauma counseling, emergency aid, discipleship training, socio-economic support and persecution survival training.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God brings peace to stop the spreading violence in Nigeria
- For hope and stability for the thousands of Christians who have fled their homes
- That the Nigeria's government would do everything they can to protect people.

8 PAKISTAN



POPULATION
249.9 million / 4.8 million Christians
LEADER
President Asif Ali Zardari
PERSECUTION SCORE 87 (no change) ↔

Christians in Pakistan experience everything from everyday discrimination to the threat of deadly violence.

Increasingly, Pakistan's blasphemy laws are used to intimidate Christians and other religious minorities. Even an accusation can provoke mob violence against victims that spills into the wider Christian community. Sadly, weak government and the growing influence of Islamist extremist groups leaves Christians with limited protection.

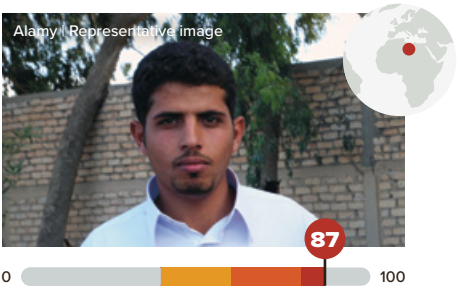
Most Christians descend from the lowest caste in Pakistan and live in poverty, trapped in a cycle of bonded labor on the margins of society.

> **Open Doors partners provide education, health and relief work, biblical literacy and leadership training and livelihood projects.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For those unjustly accused of blasphemy – pray they will avoid imprisonment or vigilante violence
- That Christians forced into menial jobs will know their value in Christ
- That peace will continue between Pakistan and India.

9 LIBYA



POPULATION
7 million / 36,300 Christians
LEADER
Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh
PERSECUTION SCORE 87 (-4) ↓

The absence of a single central government to impose law and order in Libya has left Christians vulnerable to violence.

In recent years, different authorities have increased their monitoring of Christians' online activities. Christian converts from Islam face intense pressure from their families and communities.

Migrant Christians, traveling from other parts of Africa, are targeted by criminal groups. They traffic and kidnap foreign Christians for ransom or force them into hard labor. Each year, many migrant Christians are believed to die trying to reach Europe from Libya.

> **Open Doors local partners support believers in North Africa through leadership and discipleship training, trauma care, prayer and livelihood help.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That the rule of law will return to replace Libya's chaos and violence
- That the few Christians in Libya will find fellowship with each other
- For God's protection over migrant Christians passing through the country.

10 IRAN



0 100

POPULATION
90.4 million / 800,000 Christians
LEADER
Ayatollah Ali Khamenei
PERSECUTION SCORE 87 (+1) ↑

In Iran, the secret church is growing fast, but it's still illegal to become a Christian. The Islamist regime sees the spread of Christianity as a threat to "national security."

Underground churches are raided, followed by arrests, interrogations and long-term incarcerations in dire prisons. The number of church leaders imprisoned skyrocketed last year. Believers are released under strict conditions, like exile in another part of Iran. Each year, thousands flee Iran to escape persecution.

Iran's ancient Armenian and Assyrian Christians must not worship in Persian or discuss faith with Muslims.

> **Open Doors partners work in neighboring countries to help Iranian believers with training, discipleship, trauma care and online ministry.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God will ease the strict treatment from authorities to Christians
- For the believers who risk everything to gather and worship
- For the comfort and release of church leaders imprisoned in Iran.

11 AFGHANISTAN



0 100

POPULATION
44.5 million / Thousands of Christians
LEADER
Taliban Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada
PERSECUTION SCORE 86 (+1) ↑

Afghanistan is a place of extreme persecution for anyone who dares to follow Jesus under the oppressive rule of the Taliban.

As far as the Taliban is concerned, it is not possible that any Afghan could be a Christian. Believers have either fled the country or gone deeper underground. Families and clans feel obliged to deal harshly with those who turn to Christianity. Merely avoiding attending the mosque can trigger suspicions, with catastrophic consequences.

The church exists only in increasingly fragmented, secretive gatherings.

> **Given the risks faced by our partners and the people they serve, we are restricted in the information we can provide about Afghanistan.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the Christians still enduring Taliban rule; may God give them a spirit of hope and peace
- For the safety of any Christian refugees sent back to Afghanistan by neighboring countries
- That God would miraculously change the hearts of the Taliban leaders.

KHADA

11 AFGHANISTAN



Life is impossibly hard for Christian women in Afghanistan. The Taliban's suffocation of women's rights and religious freedom pushes them into the shadows. Khada* knows this all too well – and yet she can still say, "I'm not just surviving, I'm truly living."



"My life as a widow in my country is a blend of deep suffering and precious spiritual experiences," she says. "My husband's death [for his faith] has left a deep wound in my heart, but faith brings meaning and peace amidst hardship."

Khada says that whilst Afghanistan is "calmer," it's no less oppressive. "Yet, I've tasted the sweetness of God's presence. In nights full of tears, He was with me; and in dark days, He lit up hope in my heart. I was not a weak woman, just a broken-hearted one. I press on – stronger, more independent, and with a deeper faith."

"IN DARK DAYS, HE LIT UP HOPE IN MY HEART"

Khada draws encouragement from God moving in people's lives. "I've witnessed skeptics become beacons of faith after experiencing the love and protection of the Holy Spirit. Faith finds its way in, even in the darkest times."

Crucial to this are your prayers. "Whenever you pray for us, a new flame of hope is kindled in our hearts," she adds. "In a world that often forgets us, knowing that someone, somewhere, is praying with a bright heart for us means that we are seen. And to us, that means everything."

DID YOU KNOW?

Parks, public baths and gyms are off-limits to Afghan women, and Afghan women can only enter markets or travel with a male guardian. "It's a gradual erasure of women from society," says Khada.

HOW CAN I PRAY?

"Please pray for the breaking down of fear and oppression," asks Khada, "and for patience, comfort and peace for our minds and souls."

*Name changed and re-enactment images used for security reasons

12 INDIA



POPULATION
1.5 billion / 72.3 million Christians
LEADER
Prime Minister Narendra Modi
PERSECUTION SCORE 84 (no change) ↔

The tensions for Christians in India are on the rise amidst increasing Hindu nationalism and anti-conversion laws in more and more states.

Indian identity is synonymous with Hinduism for much of the population, exacerbating issues of systemic discrimination and attacks on Christians.

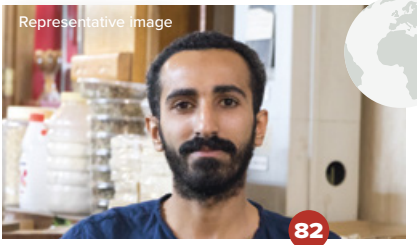
Though they are meant to protect all religions, anti-conversion laws have caused the arrest and imprisonment of several believers. House churches are sometimes shut down without notice, and some states are intensifying the ramifications of anti-conversion laws.

> **Open Doors partners provide persecution survival training and other training, livelihood support and emergency aid.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That the thousands of Christians displaced by violence in Manipur State find new homes and new hope
- That believers would be spared violence from extremists
- That anti-conversion laws wouldn't be used to unfairly oppress Christians.

13 SAUDI ARABIA



POPULATION
38 million / 2.3 million Christians
LEADER
King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud
PERSECUTION SCORE 82 (-1) ↓

In Saudi Arabia, all citizens are considered Muslim, with Islam a huge part of the national identity.

Leaving Islam technically carries the death sentence, though this has not recently been carried out. Converts who don't keep their faith secret face rejection and even violence from their families and clans. There are no legal public churches in Saudi Arabia. Despite all this, the number of Christian converts is growing.

Most Christians in Saudi Arabia are migrant workers. If they are found sharing their faith, they face arrest and deportation.

> **Open Doors raises prayer support for believers and churches in Saudi Arabia.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would make a way for Saudi believers to meet together safely
- That migrant Christians who meet in secret can continue to worship without hindrance
- For Jesus to reach more people in Saudi Arabia through dreams and visions.



PASTOR SIAN* / INDIA
During violent riots in Manipur, five of the churches Sian pastors were destroyed. Courageously, he remains determined to serve the many displaced Christians.

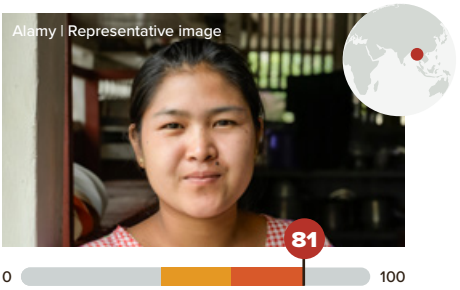
*Name changed for security reasons


safia



RELIEF AID / MALI
Open Doors local partners delivered desperately needed relief to 42 Christian families who have been displaced by the growing extremist violence.

14 MYANMAR



POPULATION
55.3 million / 4.6 million Christians
LEADER
General Min Aung Hlaing
PERSECUTION SCORE 81 (no change) ↔

It's now five years since the military coup that deepened Myanmar's civil war and affected the whole country.

Christians have been caught in the crossfire, with believers killed, churches bombed and villages destroyed. Thousands have been displaced.

Being Buddhist is seen as part of the national identity. Other faiths are often considered a foreign threat and converting seen as a betrayal. It's very difficult to register a church, and sharing faith is strongly opposed.

> **Open Doors partners strengthen persecuted believers in Myanmar through literature distribution, persecution survival training, presence ministry and livelihood support.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the many thousands displaced by the 2025 earthquake – including Christians – as they rebuild
- For a change of heart in the authorities that stops them from targeting Christians
- For the church leaders and evangelists who risk their lives bringing God's Word to remote areas.

15 MALI



POPULATION
24.8 million / 867,000 Christians
LEADER
Transition President Assimi Goïta
PERSECUTION SCORE 81 (+1) ↑

Some parts of Mali are too dangerous for Christians to live in at all.

In these areas, Islamist extremist groups target Christians with violence, abductions and by burning down churches. Evangelical Christians are often accused of being "Western agents."

Lawless zones ruled by organized crime leave Christians defenseless against extremists. In 2025, multiple believers were killed and at least 100 churches and Christian properties were destroyed. Under military rule, Christian leaders and activists who dare to speak out face surveillance, intimidation and arbitrary detention.

> **Open Doors partners support Malian believers through persecution survival training and economic empowerment initiatives.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God makes a way for peace and security to come to Mali
- For protection over Christians at risk from Islamist extremist groups
- For Open Doors partners in Mali as they help displaced believers.



PASTOR YANG

14 MYANMAR

Feeling at home is impossible for Pastor Yang* and his young family in Myanmar. Because of conflict and persecution, displacements are relentless.

"We have had to live amidst the sounds of gunfire and bomb explosions," he says. "All this deeply traumatizes my wife. My children fear the loud noises. As a husband and a father, sometimes I feel helpless that I cannot make my own family feel safe."

"WE FEEL UNSAFE HERE, BUT WE CHOOSE TO STAY"

Myanmar is the scene of the world's longest running civil war. The military coup in 2021 has heightened hostilities. All Burmese people are vulnerable, but as part of a minority religion that's often deemed "foreign," Christians are especially at risk from all levels of society – and from both sides of the conflict.

Incredibly, despite the dangers, Pastor Yang continues to shepherd the scattered believers under his care. Last year, after yet another period of displacement, a fragile peace allowed the family to return home. "As a pastor, I'm responsible for looking after the remaining believers in the village. We feel unsafe here, but we choose to stay."

Open Doors local partners continue to serve persecuted believers in Myanmar through various initiatives, including persecution survival training. "The reason we remain resilient amidst persecution and hardship is because of this training," says Pastor Yang.

"My church members are my family members," he explains. "They are my spiritual children. Being a father in the family and a pastor in the church, it is impossible to focus only on my family's difficulties. I cannot ignore them."

DID YOU KNOW?

Christians already faced significant persecution before the coup and the current unrest. Like many conflicts, the situation is used by those in power as an opportunity to target Christians with even tighter restrictions.

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

"We rely on your prayers for our safety, and I truly believe it's because of those prayers that we're still safe today," says Pastor Yang. Pray for protection, strength and encouragement for all church leaders in Myanmar.

*Name changed for security reasons

16 BURKINA FASO



POPULATION
24.4 million / 6.1 million Christians
LEADER
President Ibrahim Traoré
PERSECUTION SCORE 80 (+4) ↑

Burkina Faso rose four spots on this year's World Watch List due to increasing violence toward Christians.

Burkina Faso has been led by a military government since 2022. Political instability has allowed Islamist extremist groups to dominate parts of the country and attack Christians with impunity.

Extremist religious leaders encourage communities to be hostile toward Christians. Churches have been closed and set on fire and Christian homes and businesses destroyed. Christians can face threats, attacks and displacement. Anyone leaving Islam to follow Jesus is especially at risk.

Open Doors partners serve the church in Burkina Faso through persecution survival training, relief efforts, spiritual care and trauma care.

PLEASE PRAY

- That Islamist extremists would encounter the truth of Jesus
- For comfort for Christians who have been displaced or lost loved ones
- For God's blessing on local partners as they care for displaced believers.

17 CHINA



POPULATION
1.4 billion / 96.7 million Christians
LEADER
President Xi Jinping
PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (-1) ↓

The Chinese Communist Party sees Christianity as a threat that must be tightly controlled and contained.

The state closely monitors who attends its registered churches and what is preached to ensure it aligns with communist ideology. Anyone under 18 years of age is not permitted to attend church.

Many churches therefore decide not to register and meet as underground house churches. It's a brave move that can bring raids, fines, arrests and imprisonments, especially for church leaders. China also monitors internet use intensely, so believers must be cautious online.

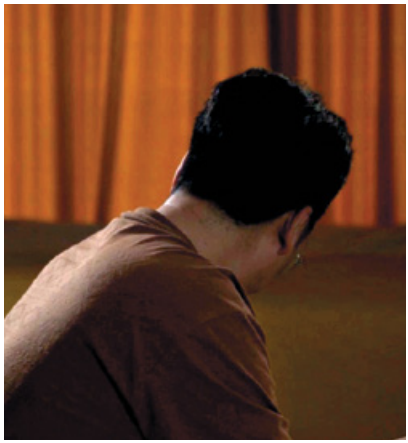
Open Doors partners support persecuted Christians in China through practical support, literature and discipleship training.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection and courage in the face of the uncertainty
- That God would be working to raise up a new generation of Chinese Christians
- For wisdom and strength for church leaders.

DA WEI

17 CHINA



When Da Wei* was first arrested for involvement in a Christian school, he discovered the police had a 23-page profile on him detailing his life as a believer. It was the same for his co-workers. "They even recorded incidents that we almost forgot," he recalls.

Da Wei is passionate about the next generation of believers in China. Voyagers, which he helped found, provides education and discipleship for children, particularly those from challenging backgrounds. But because of suffocating surveillance and laws forbidding anyone under 18 from engaging in religious activities, it's an almost impossible task.

"THANK YOU – YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT ARE LIKE AN ANGEL'S EMBRACE"

After Da Wei and his co-workers were released, the school relocated several times. Once, they bravely took to a local square to evangelize, only to encounter an undercover officer. Students and teachers were detained for six hours, the school was raided and Da Wei was interrogated four more times.

Wearied by persecution, Da Wei cried out, "Lord, I want to give up now. It's not that I don't want to continue. We just can't find any places to stay."

His prayer was answered when he happened to meet Open Doors' partners, who helped provide a new venue alongside other support. "I deeply feel the importance of companionship and the warmth of fellowship," says Da Wei.

"Thank you – your prayers and support are like an angel's embrace, a beam of light in the darkness and a charcoal fire in the cold. It's tangible, powerful and heartwarming."

DID YOU KNOW?

In China, people are offered incentives to report on "illegal" church activities, exposing many Christians to further danger and making it difficult for them to know whom to trust.

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

Da Wei says, "We need more people to participate in, and support, the next generation ministry for God's kingdom." Pray for more leaders.

*Name changed for security reasons



YASIN

18 IRAQ

“Stop what you’re doing, or we will kill you,” said the message that greeted Yasin* in Iraq one morning. He’s grown used to threats like this, even surviving attempts on his life. And yet, despite the often impossible environment, he keeps sharing the gospel.

Yasin first encountered Jesus through a dream. “I cannot describe how beautiful he was,” he recalls. Initially, he kept his faith from his family, even covering the title of his Bible in tape, but then he shared his secret. “How could you bring such a book into our house?” asked his wife after seeing his Bible. Yet after much prayer, his wife and children also became Christians.

“THERE IS NO OTHER WAY. JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS TO REDEEM ME. I WILL NOT DENY OR LEAVE HIM”

Sharing the gospel with others, though, has been far more difficult – and dangerous. “My brother tried to kill me several times,” says Yasin. After one threatening letter, his house was firebombed. He’s lost his shop and nobody will give him a steady job. “Sometimes, we are even afraid to go outside,” says Yasin.

Despite the risks, Yasin can’t keep Jesus to himself. And his witness is changing lives. Two people who persecuted him have become Christians, and a further two are exploring faith. Through social media, he’s preached to a mullah (Islamic leader) and prayed with him. The man is now reading the Bible.



“The persecution is continuous,” says Yasin. “But there is no other way. Jesus died on the cross to redeem me. I will not deny or leave Him.”

DID YOU KNOW?

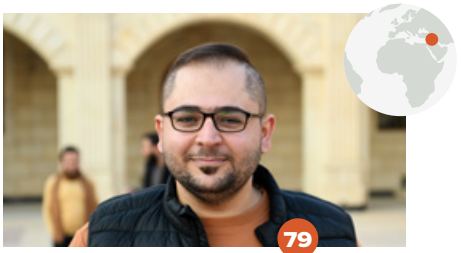
The number of Christians in Iraq has fallen to around 187,000 from one million over the last decade due to war and persecution.

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

“Pray for me because I believe in the power of prayer,” says Yasin. “Pray that God gives me strength to evangelize to as many people as possible, and that God protects my children.”

*Name changed for security reasons

18 IRAQ



0 100

POPULATION
47.6 million / 187,000 Christians
LEADER
President Abdul Rashid
PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (+1) ↑

The church in Iraq is still working to re-establish itself years after being brutally targeted by the so-called Islamic State (IS).

Iraqi Christians – especially converts from Islam – face threats from Islamist extremist groups and discrimination from government agencies. Christians struggle with powerful people seizing their property.

The main pressure on Iraqi Christians comes from Iranian-backed Shiite militias. Turkish and Iranian military operations in Iraqi Kurdistan have also severely damaged Christian villages, causing many believers to flee. In April 2025, an attack was carried out by an IS supporter, injuring two Christians.

> **Open Doors partners support the church in Iraq through crisis aid, Bibles, training, presence ministry and socio-economic development.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection over new Christians, and that they'll know they aren't alone
- That believers who have not fled the country are greatly used by God as salt and light
- For those affected by the 2025 attack.

19 MALDIVES



0 100

POPULATION
515,000 / Hundreds of Christians
LEADER
President Mohamed Muizzu
PERSECUTION SCORE 79 (+1) ↑

The Maldives proudly claims to be "100% Muslim"– and that makes converting to Christianity extremely dangerous.

In this conservative, tight-knit country, where your neighbors know everything, Christian converts must practice their faith in absolute secrecy. It's an isolating existence. Even the internet is censored. Anyone found to be Christian will experience severe opposition from the authorities as well as their family and local community.

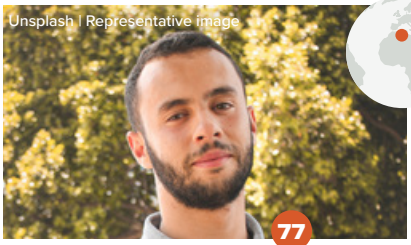
Many foreign Christians work in tourism in the Maldives; they are closely monitored to stop them from publicly worshipping or sharing their faith with locals.

> **Open Doors raises prayer support for our persecuted family in the Maldives.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the effort to translate the whole Bible into the native language of the Maldives
- That brave new Christians would be protected from harm
- That those forced to worship in such secrecy would somehow find fellowship.

20 ALGERIA



POPULATION
46.9 million / 156,000 Christians
LEADER
President Abdelmadjid Tebboune
PERSECUTION SCORE 77 (no change) ↔

Over the past three years, state pressure on Protestant Christians in Algeria has soared.

Nearly every Protestant church in Algeria has been forced to close by the authorities or has stopped meeting due to fear of government action.

This has isolated Algerian Christians, who are mostly from Muslim backgrounds and face strong opposition from their communities and even their families. Meanwhile, more than 50 Christians have been prosecuted in recent years, with some receiving suspended prison sentences and fines.

> **Open Doors partners support believers in North Africa through leadership and discipleship training, trauma counseling, prayer and livelihood assistance.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That the Christians who have lost their place of worship will be able to find fellowship
- For protection over any Christian at risk for converting or sharing the gospel
- For church leaders facing court cases for their commitment to sharing Jesus.

21 MAURITANIA



POPULATION
5.1 million / 11,100 Christians
LEADER
President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani
PERSECUTION SCORE 76 (+2) ↑

People who become Christians in Mauritania risk the death penalty for leaving Islam.

Since 2018, the government has said it will enforce strict apostasy laws, including execution for blasphemy or converting. Christian converts face severe opposition from their families and communities. Extremist leaders have incited public demonstrations against “infidel” Christians.

Foreign Christians expressing their faith may be viewed as trying to preach to Muslims, which can lead to imprisonment and deportation. It’s almost impossible for any Christian in Mauritania to publicly live out their faith.

> **Open Doors partners support believers in North Africa through leadership and discipleship training, trauma counseling, prayer and livelihood assistance.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For followers of Jesus feeling the hostility against them in Mauritania
- That apostasy laws will be overturned and replaced with freedom of religion
- For God’s encouragement over Mauritania’s small but resilient church.

22 CAR (Central African Republic)



POPULATION
6 million / 4.5 million Christians
LEADER
President Faustin-Archange Touadéra
PERSECUTION SCORE 75 (+3) ↑

Worsening instability in the Central African Republic (CAR) has contributed to its rise in this year's World Watch List.

CAR is suffering from widespread lawlessness. Armed groups, corrupt officials and Islamist extremists exploit this, often targeting Christians. Churches have been looted and destroyed, and Christians face threats, detention or assassination. Women and youth suffer exploitation and abuse, with no justice. Thousands of Christians have fled violence and live in overcrowded camps.

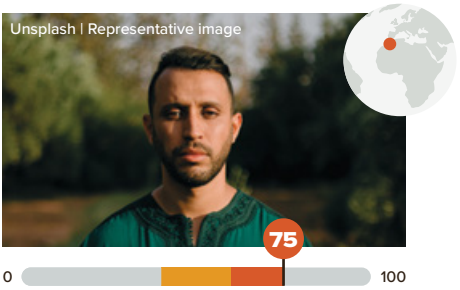
Conflict in neighboring Sudan now risks spilling into CAR, further endangering vulnerable people – especially Christians.

> **Open Doors partners support Christians in CAR through persecution survival training, socio-economic opportunities and literacy and discipleship programs.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the Prince of Peace to do a miracle and end 10 years of conflict in CAR
- For the many victims of sexual violence in CAR — pray for their healing
- For God to comfort all who mourn the loss of loved ones.

23 MOROCCO



POPULATION
38.6 million / 37,400 Christians
LEADER
King Mohammed VI
PERSECUTION SCORE 75 (+1) ↑

Modern Morocco retains a strong Islamic identity, with the monarchy claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad. It's dangerous for anyone who chooses to follow Jesus, particularly young people.

Converts can encounter intense pressure to renounce their faith, including isolation, expulsion and violence. They may lose their jobs. Having a conversation about Christianity is essentially illegal. Understandably, many believers keep their faith secret, and some feel like they're the only believers for miles around.

> **Open Doors partners support believers in North Africa through leadership and discipleship training, trauma counseling, prayer and livelihood assistance.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That Moroccan church leaders will be able to access the leadership training they want and need
- For fellowship for women who convert to Christianity and face severe persecution
- That Christians can be wise and courageous as they live out their faith in Morocco.



PULCHERIE* / CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
Because of her faith, Pulcherie (center) and her four children were shunned by their community. Thanks to your support, she started a business. “The Lord has wiped away our tears,” she said. “I now know that our God is the God of widows and orphans.”

*Name changed for security reasons

ABOUT THE WORLD WATCH LIST









For over 70 years, Open Doors has stood alongside those who pay a high price for following Christ. Our global underground networks work in more than 70 countries, providing vital aid and support, enabling Christians in some of the darkest places on earth to share the light of Jesus.

This is why your prayers, gifts and actions make such a difference. You can continue to pray by signing up for weekly emails to inform and inspire you with news and prayer requests. You can use your voice to tell others what is happening. And you can give to support persecuted Christians, providing an isolated Christian with a precious Bible, helping rebuild shattered homes and churches, supplying persecuted Christians with vital food and medicine and much, much more.

READ IMPOSSIBLE STORIES.
PRAY IMPOSSIBLE PRAYERS.
BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN.

Find out more at **odus.org/wwl**

ABOUT THE WORLD WATCH LIST

Now in its 33rd year, the Open Doors World Watch List ranks the countries where the persecution of Christians is most extreme. Data is based on in-country, eyewitness information, using networks developed over decades. This data is converted into a "persecution score," which is ranked into categories:

- **EXTREME:** 81-100 points
- **VERY HIGH:** 61-80 points
- **HIGH:** 41-60 points



SECRET BAPTISMS / NORTH KOREAN BELIEVERS
In a safe house in a secret location, there is a baptism service for escaped North Korean believers. Some of them have since become leaders and started Bible study groups for other North Korean women.

WORLD WATCH LIST 2026



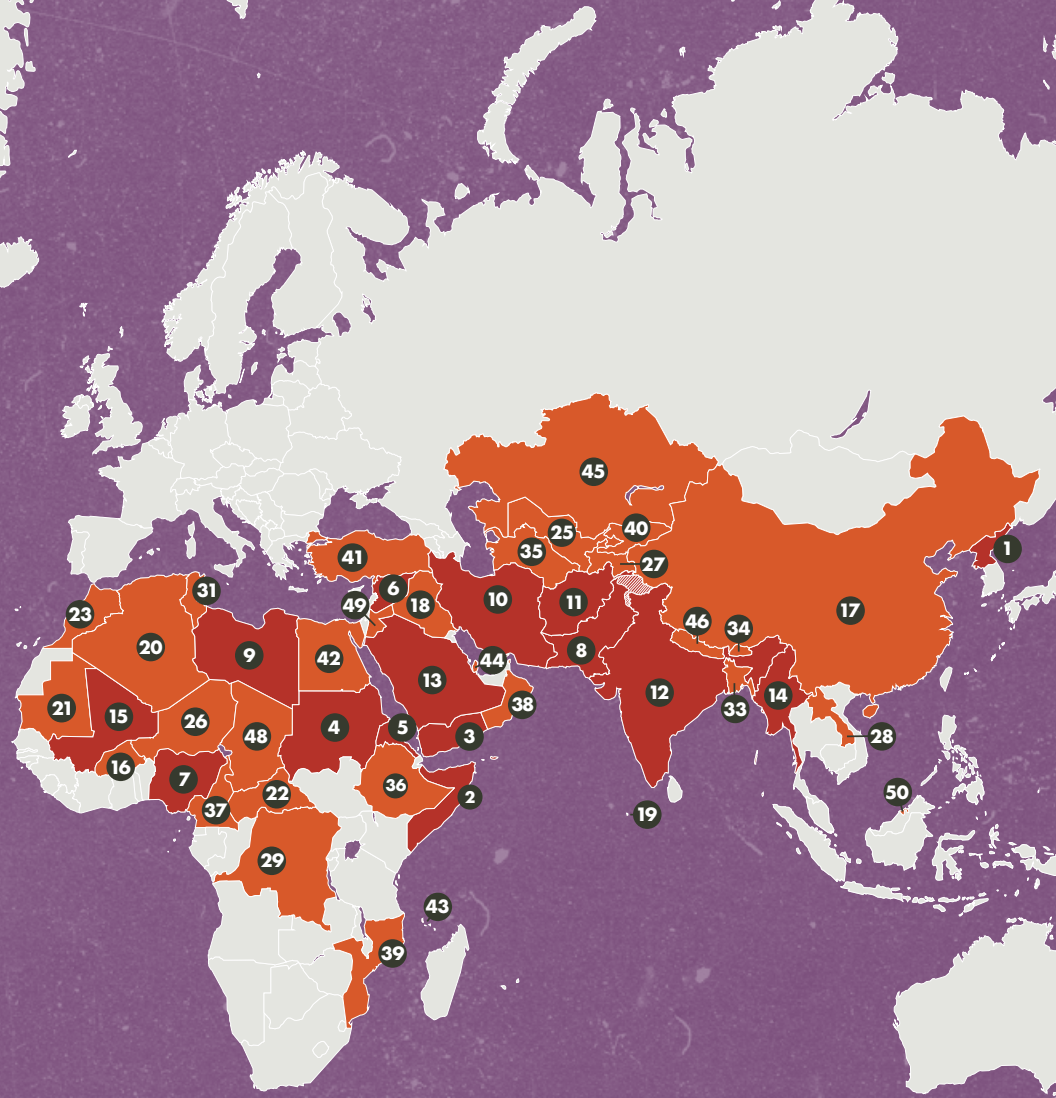
"EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE FOR ONE WHO BELIEVES."

— MARK 9:23

PERSECUTION LEVELS

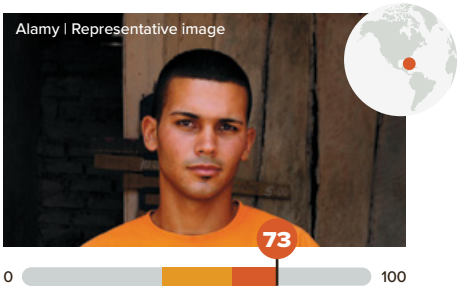
- Extreme
- Very high

1. NORTH KOREA
2. SOMALIA
3. YEMEN
4. SUDAN
5. ERITREA
6. SYRIA
7. NIGERIA
8. PAKISTAN
9. LIBYA
10. IRAN
11. AFGHANISTAN
12. INDIA
13. SAUDI ARABIA
14. MYANMAR
15. MALI
16. BURKINA FASO
17. CHINA
18. IRAQ
19. MALDIVES
20. ALGERIA
21. MAURITANIA
22. CAR (Central African Republic)
23. MOROCCO
24. CUBA
25. UZBEKISTAN
26. NIGER
27. TAJIKISTAN



28 LAOS
29 DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo)
30 MEXICO
31 TUNISIA
32 NICARAGUA
33 BANGLADESH
34 BHUTAN
35 TURKMENISTAN
36 ETHIOPIA
37 CAMEROON
38 OMAN
39 MOZAMBIQUE
40 KYRGYZSTAN
41 TÜRKIYE
42 EGYPT
43 COMOROS
44 QATAR
45 KAZAKHSTAN
46 NEPAL
47 COLOMBIA
48 CHAD
49 JORDAN
50 BRUNEI

24 CUBA



POPULATION
11.2 million / 6.9 million Christians
LEADER
President Míguel Diaz-Canel
PERSECUTION SCORE 73 (no change) ↔

Christians in Cuba must align with the country's communist agenda or risk persecution.

Those who speak out against the regime, including church leaders and Christian activists, risk arrest, smear campaigns, restrictions on movements, violence and imprisonment.

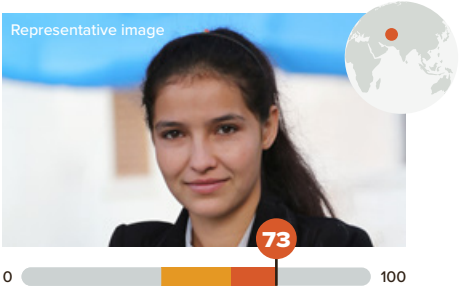
The authorities often deny registration of new churches, forcing many to operate "illegally." Sermons are frequently monitored to ensure they align with communist values. Permit denials, fines, confiscation of property, demolition, closures, legal action – such penalties against churches are common.

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Cuba through initiatives including prayer support, biblical training, financial assistance and Christian literature.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's provision for the humanitarian needs facing Cuban people
- For wisdom and courage for church leaders monitored by the government
- For the cost and availability of Bibles in Cuba to significantly improve.

25 UZBEKISTAN



POPULATION
36.6 million / 395,000 Christians
LEADER
President Shavkat Mirziyoyev
PERSECUTION SCORE 73 (no change) ↔

The authorities in Uzbekistan closely monitor religious activities, making it very challenging for Christians to express and share their faith.

Churches can be hindered by impossible requirements. They are now required to have a minimum number of members, which small congregations can't achieve. In 2025, fines for possessing "unauthorised" religious literature increased to a crippling figure.

Converts from Islam can face strong opposition from their communities. Unsurprisingly, many believers keep their faith secret.

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Central Asia through literature distribution, livelihood support and women's and children's ministry.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That church leaders would be able to conduct their ministry in peace
- For the believers in non-registered churches at risk of being raided by police
- That new believers from Muslim families will know God's grace and hope.

26 NIGER



POPULATION
29.3 million / 74,900 Christians
LEADER
General Abdourahamane Tiani
PERSECUTION SCORE 72 (no change) ↔

The situation for Christians in Niger has worsened significantly since a coup in 2023.

The instability has helped Islamist extremist groups, including those loyal to the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda. In some parts of Niger, these groups have imposed strict Islamic law. In other regions, church buildings are destroyed and believers killed.

Any Christians living in places dominated by these Islamist extremist groups will be targeted. Many believers – especially those from Muslim backgrounds – worship in secret, under the constant threat of violence, abduction and death.

> **Open Doors partners in Niger provide economic empowerment, persecution survival training, cross-cultural ministry and discipleship.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That the military will govern fairly, offer elections soon and that stability will return
- For protection over Christians displaced from their homes and those at risk from Islamist extremists
- That God will provide for Christian converts who have been shunned.

27 TAJIKISTAN



POPULATION
10.5 million / 55,000 Christians
LEADER
President Emomali Rahmon
PERSECUTION SCORE 72 (+4) ↑

Despite a high number of Muslims living in Tajikistan, the secular state has a tight grip on all religions, including Christianity.

Since 2015, pressure on unauthorized gatherings – such as Protestant churches – has risen, with an increase in raids, interrogations and fines. Everyone under 18 is banned from religious activity, including "underground" and online religious education.

There are around 3,000 Christian converts from Islam in Tajikistan, all highly vulnerable to additional persecution from their families and communities.

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Central Asia through literature distribution, livelihood support, and women's and children's ministry.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For God to keep Christians safe from government monitoring and raids
- For the Afghan refugees – including Christians – that Tajikistan is now deporting to Afghanistan
- For safety for Open Doors partners in Central Asia as they deliver Bibles and training.

28 LAOS



POPULATION

7.8 million / 219,000 Christians

LEADER

President Thongloun Sisoulith

PERSECUTION SCORE 72 (-2) ↓

Christians in Laos face intense persecution from both an authoritarian state and strongly held ethnic traditions.

The authorities view Christianity as a "Western" religion opposed to communist ideals. An estimated 75% of Laos' permitted churches lack permanent buildings, and baptisms cannot be held publicly. Consequently, many Christians are forced to meet in "illegal" house churches.

In rural areas, Christians are seen as a threat to traditional religious practices. In many cases, they are deemed to have "upset" spirits, and persecutors destroy their crops and expel them from their villages.

> **Open Doors partners support the persecuted church in Laos through leadership training, discipleship programs and literature provision.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection on the underground house churches of Laos
- That Christians expelled from their homes will find shelter and comfort in Jesus
- That the Laotian authorities would soften and allow people freedom to follow Jesus.



When Pastor Somchai* and his wife were interrogated in 2003, their refusal to deny Jesus came at a lasting, debilitating cost – their family book was confiscated.

In Laos, the family book proves citizenship and enables access to public services. "It's more important than a passport or national ID," explains the pastor. "But I was assured that my citizenship is in heaven, not on earth. My hope is in Jesus."

"GOD ANSWERS IN HIS TIME"

Many years later, he was returning from visiting a believer when he felt nudged by the Holy Spirit to ask for the impossible. "I was convicted to pray for the return of my family book. For years, I'd been praying that the authorities would return it, but they didn't. But that afternoon was different."



PASTOR SOMCHAI

Pastor Somchai contacted the authorities and, without obstacle, the book was returned. “The head officer even said, ‘We always watch you, but you’ve never done wrong. You never looked down on others or other religions. You’re good and honest.’ After over 20 years of prayer, my family book was returned.

“MY HOPE IS IN JESUS”

“Prayer needs patience. God answers in His time,” he says. “If I’d given up on praying, I wouldn’t know the reward that awaits me – the joy of seeking Jesus as I pray.”

Today, despite hostility, treacherous roads and extreme weather, the pastor helps oversee 50 house churches in his region. “Whether far or close, I must go,” he says. “This is my calling.”

DID YOU KNOW?

To the Laotian authorities, Christianity is a Western religion that’s opposed to communist ideals. Laos’ dependence on China has only reinforced this, adding to the vulnerability of believers.

HOW CAN I PRAY?

Ask the Holy Spirit to strengthen church leaders in Laos, like Pastor Somchai, and ask God to meet their every physical, emotional and spiritual need.

*Name changed for security reasons

29 DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo)



POPULATION
109 million / 104.2 million Christians
LEADER
President Félix Tshisekedi
PERSECUTION SCORE 72 (+2) ↑

In eastern DRC, Christians face severe violence. The Allied Democratic Forces – Islamist extremists – have targeted Christian communities with violence.

DRC rises by six spots on this year's World Watch List, partly due to the resurgence of the violent M23 rebel group.

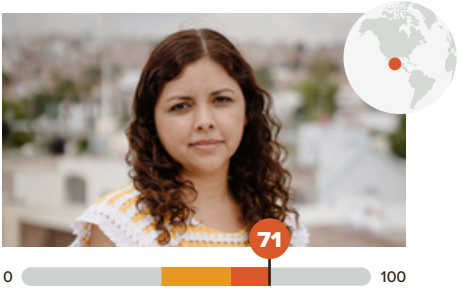
Speaking out against violence or corruption puts Christian leaders at great risk. The authorities threaten, monitor and publicly vilify clergy who criticize them, and taking a stand against M23 can result in abduction.

Open Doors partners in DRC provide physical and spiritual support to persecuted Christians through emergency aid, persecution survival training and discipleship.

PLEASE PRAY

- For peace and stability to overcome the violence in DRC
- For courage and hope for believers threatened by violence or displacement
- That DRC's Islamist extremists would encounter Jesus and promote peace instead of hate.

30 MEXICO



POPULATION
130.3 million / 124.1 million Christians
LEADER
President Claudia Sheinbaum
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (no change) ↔

The pervasive presence of criminal groups in Mexico puts many Christians in danger. In many places, law and order have broken down, and cartels operate with almost no consequences.

It's often Christians who bravely speak out or try to counter what the criminals are doing, and this puts them at great risk of revenge.

In indigenous communities, those who turn from local beliefs to follow Jesus can face fines, discrimination, imprisonment and displacement, with little hope of justice.

Open Doors strengthens Christians in Mexico through projects including livelihood support, trauma care and legal advocacy.

PLEASE PRAY

- For the brave Christians sharing Jesus in areas where this brings persecution
- That God thwarts the plans of the cartels who bring violence and crime to communities
- For Open Doors local partners as they walk alongside Mexican believers.



ARISE AFRICA

THE YEAR THE WORLD STARTED TAKING NOTICE

Millions of Christians in sub-Saharan Africa face violent persecution for their faith. They are attacked and killed. Their houses and churches are burned, their farms stolen. That's why the African church is calling on their global church family to stand with them through the *Arise Africa* campaign.

Last year, our campaign highlighted a powerful message from Pastor Barnabas,* a Nigerian church leader. "Millions of Christians are displaced in Nigeria and the whole of Africa," he said. "News doesn't cover it. Nobody talks about it. We are remaining in the darkness."

But by the end of 2025, the darkness had begun to lift. A little.

International media and politicians finally began to report on the situation. There were stories and articles, social media posts and features on the news. People started talking.

"WE ARE APPEALING TO CHRISTIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD TO LOOK UPON OUR SUFFERINGS AND COME TO OUR RESCUE"

All of which is encouraging. But, of course, talk is easy; what we really need is action. What we really need is change.

'I STILL HAVE GOD'

Abraham is the chairman of an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Benue State, central Nigeria. He has lived there, with his wife and three children, ever since armed Fulani militants attacked his home village in April 2021. Eight people were killed that night, including Abraham's brother. Entire families fled, their homes and farms left in ashes. Abraham only

*Name changed for security reasons

escaped by falling into a ditch where he was concealed by leaves.

In the camp, life is a daily struggle.

“I keep praying to God for provision,” Abraham says. “Let Him give us food to eat to encourage us to remain alive because life is tough here.”

Despite the hardship, Abraham is a voice of faith.

“I still have God, and He is still on the throne,” he says. “He will surely deliver me.”

Thanks to your support, Open Doors partners were able to deliver much needed food supplies. The impact this has made on Abraham and so many others, both practically and spiritually, is enormous.

“The food being given to us shows us that Christians all over the world care about us and remember us,” Abraham says. “That makes us very happy. This organization is helping thousands of people in Nigeria, not just me.”



Thanks to your support, Abraham and many others have received vital food supplies.

ATTACKS IN BENUE

Five years on, things have not improved in the region. Benue state has seen many more attacks. On one night alone, in June 2025, a Christian farming community in Benue State was attacked by ethnic Fulani militants. They shot or burned to death more than 200 people, mostly women and children.

Meanwhile, the response of our supporters around the world has been remarkable. Our emergency appeal for Christians in Benue was able to help thousands of victims. And thanks to your support, the *Arise Africa* petition has globally amassed hundreds of thousands of signatures.

“THE FOOD BEING GIVEN TO US SHOWS US THAT CHRISTIANS ALL OVER THE WORLD CARE ABOUT US AND REMEMBER US.”

But there is a long way to go. More than 16.2 million Christians in sub-Saharan Africa have been displaced by violence and conflict. Their voices need to be heard.

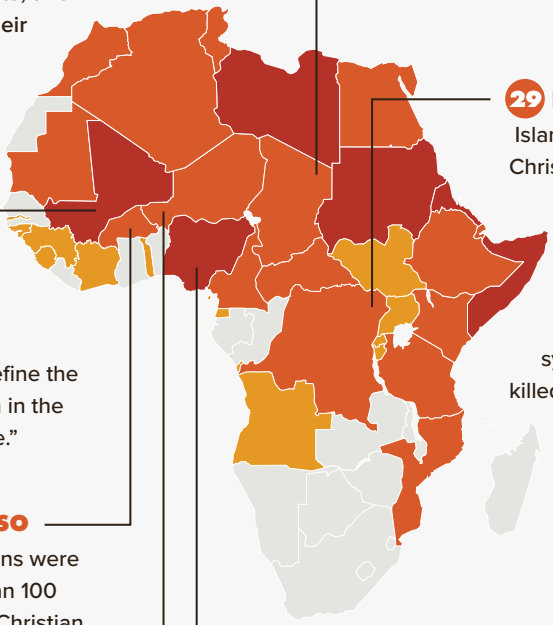
As Abraham says, “Brothers and sisters, I appeal to you all that you help us by praying for us and these attacks. We are appealing to Christians all over the world to look upon our sufferings and come to our rescue.”

The *Arise Africa* campaign is neither stopping, nor slowing down. We are continuing to ask supporters to speak up and to call on the US government and international community to act.

We need to pray, to give and to speak out. To do all we can to stop the violence and start the healing. Visit odus.org/petition to learn more.

ARISE AFRICA – THE COUNTRIES

Throughout the region, persecution feeds on lawlessness and failing governmental control. Of the 14 sub-Saharan countries in the Top 50, five have seen the overthrow of their governments, two have suspended their constitutions, and five are in the grip of armed conflict.



48 CHAD
is surrounded by conflict spilling over from neighboring countries, especially Sudan.

29 DRC
Islamist forces target Christian communities in the east. Churches are easy targets, and Christians wearing crosses or other religious symbols risk being killed on sight.

15 MALI
the level of violence has risen so much that Open Doors' researchers now define the level of persecution in the country as "extreme."

16 BURKINA FASO
at least 150 Christians were killed, and more than 100 churches or public Christian properties were destroyed or closed due to militant Islamist activities.

7 NIGERIA
is the most violent place on earth for Christians. Last year 3,490 Christians were killed because of their faith – an increase of 12.5% from the previous year.

26 NIGER
extremist groups perpetrate killings, abductions, village raids and extortion. Huge rural areas are effectively controlled by armed groups or criminal networks.

THE COUNTRIES

2 Somalia
4 Sudan
5 Eritrea
7 Nigeria
15 Mali
16 Burkina Faso
21 Mauritania
22 CAR
26 Niger
29 DRC
36 Ethiopia
37 Cameroon
39 Mozambique
48 Chad

31 TUNISIA



POPULATION
12.7 million / 23,000 Christians
LEADER
President Kais Saied
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (+1) ↑

Christians in Tunisia are subject to increasing surveillance by Tunisian authorities. They may be arrested, questioned and have their homes searched.

For the first time last year, authorities arrested foreign Christians under the guise of tackling human trafficking. Many of these Christians were not undocumented migrants, but foreign-born Christians who lost their jobs, faced racial abuse from their communities or felt forced to flee.

Due to hostility, Tunisian Christian converts feel forced to conceal their faith. Unable to gather for worship and mutual support, they feel very isolated.

> **Open Doors partners support the church in North Africa through leadership, discipleship and ministry training and by supporting Christians' livelihoods.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would bring freedom of religion to Tunisia
- For God's protection over converts from Islam who face substantial persecution
- That followers of Jesus would find fellowship and grow in discipleship.

32 NICARAGUA



POPULATION
7.2 million / 6.8 million Christians
LEADER
President Daniel Ortega
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (no change) ↔

Christians in Nicaragua are increasingly being silenced under dictatorial rule.

Believers who speak up about human rights violations have faced surveillance, intimidation, imprisonment and even losing their citizenship. Meanwhile, churches and other Christian institutions have had assets seized, activities disrupted and buildings vandalized.

This growing suffocation of Christian freedom began after nationwide protests against the government in 2018. It's only gotten worse, with legal changes enabling a crackdown on the church.

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Nicaragua through livelihood support, legal assistance, persecution survival training and leadership care.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For Pastors in Nicaragua who face arbitrary arrest and detention
- For God's protection on Open Doors partners as they seek to strengthen the Nicaraguan church
- That churches under surveillance would have courage and wisdom.

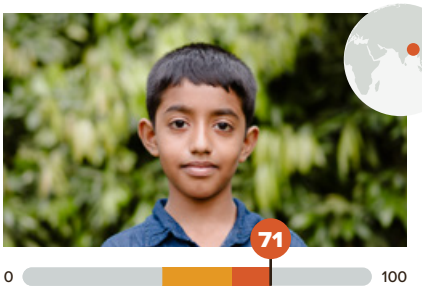


SUNDAY SCHOOL / NICARAGUA
Christians are facing increasingly oppressive conditions in Nicaragua. But this group of Sunday School children is still finding strength in scripture.



SUNDAY SCHOOL / BANGLADESH
Open Doors supports children facing bullying and isolation with practical support, discipleship training and special Sunday School materials.

33 BANGLADESH



POPULATION
176.4 million / 950,000 Christians
LEADER
President Mohammad Shahabuddin
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (-3) ↓

Persecution of Bangladesh's Christians continues amid political uncertainty and social unrest.

Bangladesh now has an interim government with a commitment to minorities, but sadly a power vacuum and poor security have been exploited by religious extremists. Christians and other religious minorities have been violently attacked, with many forced into hiding.

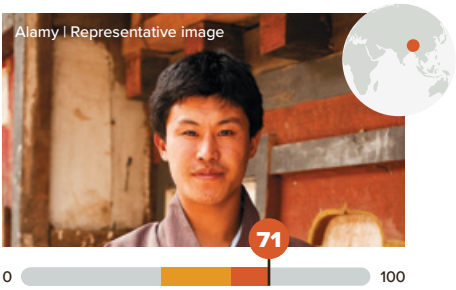
Tribal Christians from ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to persecution. Converts among the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar face huge pressures from their community, including death threats.

Open Doors strengthens the persecuted church in Bangladesh through emergency aid, Bibles and other literature and discipleship training.

PLEASE PRAY

- For healing and endurance for Christian communities attacked by extremists
- For people who change faiths to follow Jesus – may they know they aren't alone
- That God increases the brave, resilient faith of believers in Bangladesh.

34 BHUTAN



POPULATION
797,000 / 19,300 Christians
LEADER
King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (+2) ↑

Citizens of Bhutan are expected to be Buddhists. There is huge pressure on Christian converts to renounce their newfound faith.

Outside of the capital city, it's very difficult for Christians to express their faith. The close-knit society makes it hard to follow Jesus quietly, and neighbors may report you to the authorities. Bhutan village leaders issue a certificate to confirm you are a good citizen; without this, Christians can struggle to get a loan or a job.

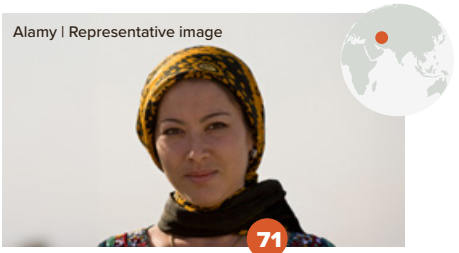
Sharing the gospel can lead to up to three years in prison. Christians have to gather in secret.

Open Doors partners strengthen the persecuted church in Bhutan through prayer and practical emergency support.

PLEASE PRAY

- For protection over Christians in Bhutan whose only option is attending "illegal," unregistered churches
- For believers who have converted from Buddhism and face great opposition
- For hope and joy for Open Doors partners supporting the church in Bhutan.

35 TURKMENISTAN



POPULATION
6.7 million / 95,000 Christians
LEADER
President Serdar Berdymukhamedov
PERSECUTION SCORE 71 (no change) ↔

In the totalitarian atmosphere of Turkmenistan, life for Christians can be stifling.

All citizens are closely monitored, and Protestant Christians are especially at risk. All religious material must be checked and authorized by the state, and there's a ban on Christian religious education of children, even privately. Registering new churches is virtually impossible, and even the historic churches of Turkmenistan can find their services monitored.

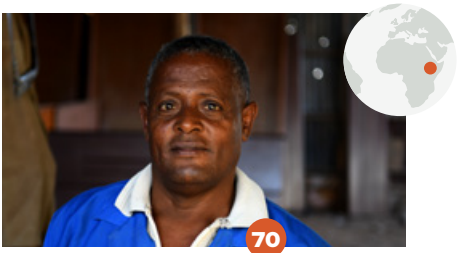
Meanwhile, those who leave Islam to follow Jesus can also face huge opposition from their own families and communities.

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Central Asia through literature distribution, livelihood support and women's and children's ministry.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For love and unity among the people of God in Turkmenistan
- For safety and courage for church leaders heavily monitored by the state
- For healing and hope for new Christians rejected by their Muslim families.

36 ETHIOPIA



POPULATION
132.9 million / 81.3 million Christians
LEADER
Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed
PERSECUTION SCORE 70 (no change) ↔

Living as a Christian in Ethiopia brings opposition from many sources, and the pressure believers face is increasing.

For those who have converted from Islam, the threats are severe.

Churches in Muslim-majority areas may be burned down, believers attacked by mobs and businesses discriminated against.

Those who do not conform to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church are often portrayed as foreign and unpatriotic. They often face pressure from their own families to return to the Orthodox Church.

> **Open Doors works in Ethiopia to provide psychosocial care, spiritual resilience training, intergenerational ministry skills training and economic empowerment projects.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That believers would be united in the face of opposition
- For protection of Christians who live in areas where extremist militants are active
- For God's blessing on trauma care work carried out by Open Doors partners in Ethiopia.



BULBULA AND ADAM

36 ETHIOPIA

Bulbula* and Adam* are inseparable. They chat about everything and go to church together. It's a beautiful friendship – one impossible to imagine a few years ago when Adam tried to kill Bulbula.

Bulbula, a former Muslim leader, met Jesus through dreams. "Come, I want you," said Jesus. One day, he was walking in town when a man said, "Come, God wants you." He took Bulbula by the hand and brought him to church before mysteriously disappearing.

"HE WAS MY PERSECUTOR, AND NOW HE'S MY FRIEND"

Bulbula became a Christian, but it's brought severe persecution from even his own family – and that included Adam, his cousin. "I thought of you as a disgrace and an infidel – that's why I tried to kill you with a spear," says Adam.

Everything changed when Adam had an encounter of his own with Jesus in his small hut. "He stood there like a real person and said, 'My son, I am calling you,'" he remembers. Like Bulbula, Adam's decision to follow Jesus has been met with hostility. He's lost possessions and crops, his wife has divorced him, and he's been beaten.

Now united by faith in Jesus, Bulbula and Adam support each other. "He was my persecutor, and now he's my friend," says Bulbula. "Persecution is good for us. It is best for us to continue walking in the right path, learning from the Bible. We stand strong saying, 'We know the right path. We've found peace, and we stick to it.'"

DID YOU KNOW?

Despite Ethiopia dropping three places to 30th in the World Watch List, persecution has worsened. In 2025, some 25 churches were attacked in a wave of violence by armed groups.

HOW CAN I PRAY?

Pray that Bulbula and Adam will remain steadfast in faith and that their stories of God's love and power will lead many others to Jesus.

*Names changed for security reasons

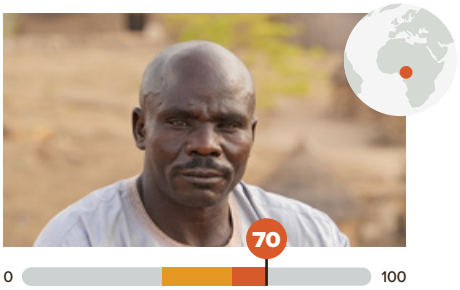




PASTOR HAMZA / CAMEROON

Pastor Hamza's church was burned to the ground by extremists. "They came. They attacked. They killed," he says. "They burned the churches. Seven people died." Now he must find a way to encourage his flock in the face of violence and fear. "The faith of many has weakened. Pray that they will persevere and that we will have the strength to bear the suffering."

37 CAMEROON



POPULATION
30.1 million / 17.4 million Christians
LEADER
President Paul Biya
PERSECUTION SCORE 70 (+3) ↑

Christians face huge threats for following Jesus, mostly because of religious extremism or instability in the nation.

Even to own a Bible can provoke attacks from violent extremist groups, and Christian women can be especially targeted through the threats of forced marriage or kidnapping.

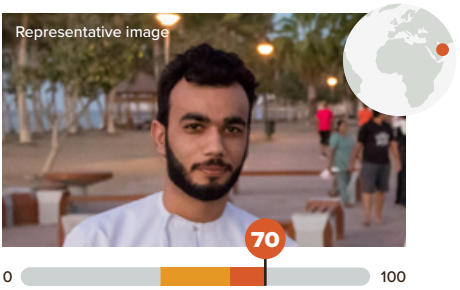
Vulnerability also stems from clan violence and organized crime where protection from authorities is scarce. Anyone who speaks out against the perpetrators runs the risk of intimidation or even arrest, and churches can be closed.

> **Open Doors serves Christians in Cameroon through persecution survival training, biblical discipleship training and economic empowerment projects.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the protection of Christians in the Far North Region of Cameroon where Islamist militants Boko Haram are active
- That God would bring greater political stability and security to the nation
- That believers would be blessed by economic empowerment projects carried out by Open Doors partners.

38 OMAN



POPULATION
4.7 million / 191,000 Christians
LEADER
Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said
PERSECUTION SCORE 70 (no change) ↔

Believers in Oman can face extreme pressures if they have left Islam to follow Jesus.

Christians born on Omani soil who converted from Islam are often strongly opposed by family, community and government. The consequences can touch every part of life, such as employment or even custody of children.

While foreigners enjoy more freedoms than native Omanis, they must not share their faith. If they are caught sharing the gospel with Muslims, they are likely to be deported.

> **Open Doors supports the Body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula by organizing prayer, distributing biblical resources and training believers and pastors.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would lead converts from Islam safely to Christian community
- For the continued spread of the gospel and bold witness despite opposition
- That foreign believers would be salt and light in their communities.

39 MOZAMBIQUE



0 100

POPULATION
35.8 million / 19.9 million Christians
LEADER
President Daniel Chapo
PERSECUTION SCORE 69 (+1) ↑

From one day to the next, believers in Mozambique can face myriad threats on their lives and homes.

Where extremist militant groups are active, churches may be burned down and individuals executed for their faith. Such threats especially arise from northern regions like the Cabo Delgado Province, where Christians are targeted.

Many choose to keep their faith secret, especially if they have converted from Islam. Even where violence is not as present, as in southern regions, Christians can still face repercussions for speaking out against the authorities.

> **Open Doors supports the church in Mozambique through cross-cultural ministry training and persecution survival training.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the victims of attacks, that they would know healing and the Lord's protection
- That stability would return to Mozambique
- For displaced believers and their constant knowledge of God's presence with them.

40 KYRGYZSTAN



0 100

POPULATION
6.9 million / 207,000 Christians
LEADER
President Sadyr Japarov
PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (+2) ↑

For Christians in Kyrgyzstan, intense opposition can come from your own family and neighbors.

Leaving Islam means facing great hostility which can affect followers of Jesus at every age and stage – children can be bullied at school, while community members can be preached against by imams and expelled from the neighborhood.

New laws introduced early in 2025 have tightened the authorities' control on church activity. This means that registering a church is almost impossible and Protestant groups are labelled as "extremist."

> **Open Doors strengthens the church in Central Asia through literature distribution, livelihood support, women's and children's ministry and prayer support.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For wisdom for believers as they navigate new religious laws introduced in 2025
- That God would protect and sustain converts from Islam facing opposition
- For the Lord's shielding of house churches under threat from infiltration.

41 TÜRKIYE



POPULATION
86.6 million / 251,000 Christians
LEADER
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (+1) ↑

To be Turkish is to be Muslim. These two identities are the same in the minds of many citizens of Türkiye, and leaving Islam is seen as betraying one's family and nation.

For believers, faith must be carried out in secret, behind closed doors. Threats of violence and social rejection confront those who convert from Islam and choose to follow Jesus.

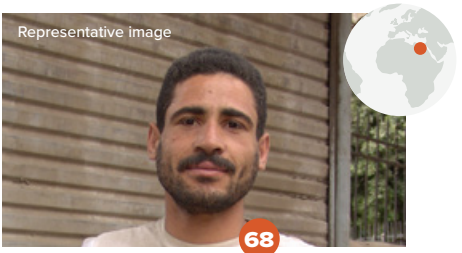
Government control of expression and activities is on the rise, increasingly limiting the practices of the church.

Open Doors partners support Christian refugees in Türkiye with persecution survival training, prayer support, resources and other practical support.

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would soften the hearts of leaders to bring them to Him
- For the Lord's empowering of Turkish Christians and their witness
- That believers from a Muslim background would find belonging in the family of God.

42 EGYPT



POPULATION
116.2 million / 10.1 million Christians
LEADER
President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi
PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (no change) ↔

For believers in Egypt, persecution comes from those closest to them. Many are ostracized by their community or even expelled for alleged blasphemy.

Rural areas are the hardest places to live for Christians in Upper Egypt. Women can be aggressively harassed, and others are made victims of mob attacks.

Even though the president speaks warmly of the nation's Christian heritage, construction of churches remains limited, and believers are vulnerable to violence.

Open Doors partners support the church in Egypt through discipleship, leadership development, literacy training, medical outreach, widows ministry and long-term work to help strengthen God's people.

PLEASE PRAY

- That believers who are looked down on would know their value in the Lord
- For God to protect Egyptian Christians against attacks
- That God would work through the efforts of Open Doors to counter harmful cultural norms.

SAMIR

42 EGYPT



At first, the grief was impossible for Samir to navigate. On February 15, 2015, in a tragedy witnessed by the world, his son was among 21 believers martyred in Libya. But over the years, faith has illuminated a path that's enabled Samir to do what was once unthinkable – forgive his son's killers.

Girgis was 24 when he, alongside 20 other Egyptians and one Ghanian, were kidnapped by the so-called Islamic State. After refusing to deny Jesus, they were taken to a beach, and, clothed in orange and facing their captors dressed in dark black, they were beheaded. As footage of their deaths spread worldwide, the 21 martyrs became a testament to unwavering faith.

"I PRAY FOR THOSE WHO KILLED HIM – THAT THEY MAY SEE THE TRUTH AND FOLLOW THE LIGHT. I HAVE FORGIVEN THEM"

Like the other martyrs, Girgis had gone to Libya to seek better opportunities to support his family. "He'd been engaged and was planning to marry in August of that same year, when he planned to return home to Egypt for good," says Samir.

"My son is a martyr for Jesus, and that is a blessing. I pray for those who killed him – that they may see the truth and follow the light. I have forgiven them. They did not know what they were doing. Why shouldn't I forgive? The Lord forgives us every second, and He forgave His own persecutors.

"Girgis is with Jesus, and that is what matters now," Samir adds. "I surely miss him every second."

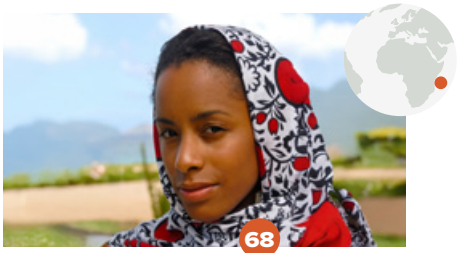
DID YOU KNOW?

Matthew, a Ghanian, became a Christian after meeting and seeing the faith of these 20 Egyptians. Accepting Christ, he was baptized by and then martyred alongside his Christian Egyptian brothers. Ghana refused to receive his body, so Egypt embraced him as one of their own.

HOW CAN YOU PRAY?

Praise God that many seeds have come from the martyrs' witness (John 12:24). Pray for this to continue – including among those who killed them.

43 COMOROS



POPULATION
883,000 / 4600 Christians
LEADER
President Azali Assoumani
PERSECUTION SCORE 68 (+1) ↑

In Comoros, Christians must be silent when it comes to discussing their faith.

In a country where Sunni Islam dominates culture and is used to suppress freedom of religion, the least mention of Jesus could be interpreted as proselytizing – a punishable offense.

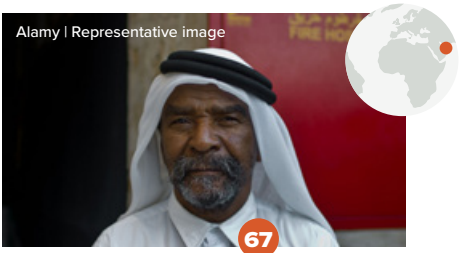
This kind of pressure on Christians spreads out across the nation because of its small size. Converts from Islam are most at risk of threats and social ostracism. Women could easily be subjected to trafficking, as Comoros serves as a transit hub for exploitation beyond its shores.

> **Open Doors partners support Christians throughout East Africa with discipleship programs and economic empowerment initiatives.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For God to protect and sustain Christian converts from Islam
- That believers following Jesus in secret would discover the joy of fellowship with others
- For the Lord to guard his people who are especially exposed to persecution.

44 QATAR



POPULATION
2.7 million / 390,000 Christians
LEADER
Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani
PERSECUTION SCORE 67 (no change) ↔

Christians in Qatar, whether foreign or native, are subject to great obstacles in sharing their faith.

In Qatar, Islam is the state religion. Even though it welcomes many immigrants, the government is fixed on keeping Islam the national identity. The impacts of this are myriad, notably legally – changing religion from Islam is not officially recognized by the authorities, causing serious legal issues around property and status.

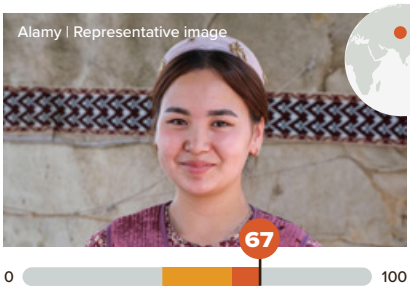
Church leaders must take extra caution in their activities, as evangelizing among Muslims is strictly forbidden.

> **Open Doors supports the body of Christ on the Arabian Peninsula through raising prayer, distributing scripture resources, discipleship and training believers and pastors.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That there would be freedom to choose faith in Qatar
- For the Lord's protection over secret Christian converts
- For strengthening of church leaders who serve immigrant communities.

45 KAZAKHSTAN



POPULATION
20 million / 3.5 million Christians
LEADER
President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev
PERSECUTION SCORE 67 (-1) ↓

The lives of Christians in Kazakhstan are characterized by constant surveillance and excessive restrictions on religious practice.

Raids, arrests and fines form an expected part of life for many from Protestant denominations, while Russian Orthodox churches encounter fewer problems because of their relative lack of engagement with surrounding communities.

To convert from Islam to Christianity is perceived as an assault on Kazakh identity, making attending church or talking about faith even harder for believers of a Muslim background.

> **Open Doors strengthens the persecuted church in Central Asia through literature distribution, livelihood support, women's and children's ministry and prayer support.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That believers would continue to have access to God's Word and be fed by it
- For the Lord's refreshment of church leaders amidst the restrictions they face
- That God would comfort converts who have been alienated from their families.

46 NEPAL



POPULATION
31.5 million / 1.4 million Christians
LEADER
Interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki
PERSECUTION SCORE 67 (+4) ↑

Christians in Nepal face daily pressure from their Hindu neighbors, hemmed in by the widespread belief that the nation should return to being an officially Hindu country.

Anti-conversion laws and pressure from family compound to create an atmosphere of fear for believers in an already uncertain political landscape. Such instability provides a cover for violence against Christians which has contributed to the rise in Nepal's World Watch List ranking.

> **Open Doors local partners in Nepal distribute Bibles and Christian literature, provide holistic and biblical training, give socio-economic aid and provide emergency help for believers in need.**

PLEASE PRAY

- For the protection of Christians who have converted from Hinduism
- That God would turn the hearts of Hindu extremists toward Him
- For political stability and freedom of religion to become a priority of the Nepalese government.



A PASTOR'S LAST PRAYER – OR NOT?

CENTRAL ASIA

"Lord, this is the last prayer of my life," said Pastor Roman* aloud after digging his own grave and surrounded by an armed group. "Give me your wisdom."

The pastor led a house church in Central Asia. But the property where they met was wanted by the 30-strong group for their fight with another tribe. The believers were threatened with death unless they relinquished it within a few days.

With astonishing bravery, the house group decided to stay – and pray. They were convinced God had given them the house for them to witness His love in the local community.

When the armed men returned a few days later, only to be met with resistance, they summoned the believers from the home. Standing in a circle and holding hands, the house group sang and prayed for their persecutors, for their families, for the village and for the country.

"I FORGIVE YOU FOR SHOOTING ME"

The armed men found the behavior strange – and they wanted to put an end to it. "We're not going to kill you all yet," they said. "We are going to kill your pastor first." Pastor Roman was taken to a dump, and, given one last opportunity to say something before he was shot, he uttered what he believed what his last prayer.

"I pray for my persecutors, Lord," he continued in front of them.



“Please give them what they need, and bless their families.”

“Why are you praying for us?” said one of the attackers.

“I forgive you for shooting me,” replied the pastor. “God loves you very much. His love will remain with you, no matter what.”

Astonished, the group said, “You’re crazy. Go to your group, and we’ll come and get you again.” Such was his readiness to die for Jesus and be with Him in heaven, Pastor Roman was upset that he was still alive, but his house church was so happy to see him alive!

A week later, the armed men returned. “We’ve come to tell you something,” its leader told Pastor Roman. “A few days ago, we were on our way to a commando mission when we were ambushed. We were shot at from all sides and had no way to flee. We thought our last hour had come. But what happened was very miraculous, because none of us were hit by a bullet. None of us were even injured.

“Your prayer came to mind. Your prayer had made a big impression on us anyway, and you even prayed for our protection. That prayer has been answered. Thank you, and know that you can continue to live and gather in freedom. We’ll protect you.”

*Name changed and illustrative image used for security reasons

47 COLOMBIA



POPULATION
52.6 million / 49.8 million Christians
LEADER
President Gustavo Petro
PERSECUTION SCORE 66 (no change) ↔

Crime, drugs, gang life – this is the context in which Christians follow Christ in Colombia.

Escalating violence means that the activities of Christians and especially those of church leaders are under constant threat from gang violence. Church leaders work to rehabilitate ex-gang members and prevent young people from being recruited, and this makes them a target for the cartels.

Believers from indigenous communities can can run the risk of imprisonment and discrimination, and those who oppose them claim that they have betrayed local traditions.

> **Open Doors supports our persecuted family in Colombia through trauma care, legal advice, education support, emergency aid and biblical training.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would bring an end to the armed conflict in Colombia and restore peace
- For the Lord's protection of believers in indigenous communities
- That believers would hold fast to faith in dangerous places where gangs dominate.

48 CHAD



POPULATION
19.4 million / 5.9 million Christians
LEADER
President Mahamat Idriss Déby Itno
PERSECUTION SCORE 66 (+1) ↑

Believers in Chad face threats every day – from their communities, extremist groups and the government.

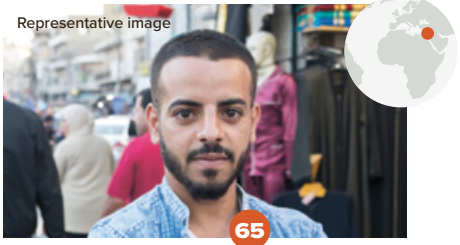
Surveillance and harassment form an atmosphere of tension and insecurity for Christians seeking to carry out church activities or share their faith with others. Dread of the next attack by Islamist extremist groups contributes to such uncertainties. Some areas have less state protection than others, making Christians there more vulnerable to attack.

> **Open Doors local partners in Chad offer persecution survival training, economic empowerment programs and other support to help persecuted Christians remain resilient.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That God would change the hearts of extremists who carry out violence against Christians
- For the hope and peace of believers under pressure from their families
- That God would help the church in Chad stand firm and show the light of Christ.

49 JORDAN



POPULATION
11.4 million / 170,000 Christians
LEADER
King Abdullah II
PERSECUTION SCORE 65 (no change) ↔

Believers in Jordan who belong to Orthodox or Roman Catholic churches benefit from a relatively high level of freedom, but pressures continue to restrict their worship.

Despite the general culture of tolerance for different faiths, extremist groups pose an unignorable threat to Christians through violence, arrest and even death. At work, Christians can find themselves discriminated against for their faith and placed under government monitoring.

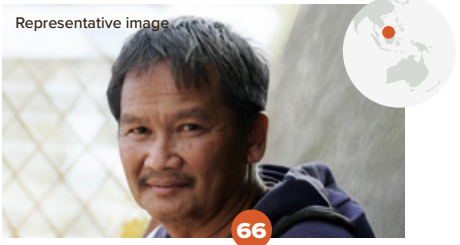
Those who preach encounter multiple restrictions, while converts from Islam face discrimination and obstacles when it comes to legal status or marriage.

> **Open Doors local partners support the church in Jordan through training, relief, rehabilitation, research and prayer.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That the monarchy would continue to recognize the positive presence of the church in Jordan
- For those who have lost family, friends and community because they follow Jesus
- That the Lord would embolden the witness of Jordanian Christians.

50 BRUNEI



POPULATION
459,000 / 53,000 Christians
LEADER
Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah
PERSECUTION SCORE 65 (-1) ↓

The pressure on Christians in Brunei is increasing with the continuing implementation of Sharia (Islamic law).

The consequences for leaving Islam create an atmosphere of fear for believers, pushing them into silence on their faith. Apostasy is punishable by law, and Christians could be imprisoned for up to 30 years.

These pressures cover every age group – Islamic education is obligatory for students, making it harder for parents to teach their children about Jesus. Church life is more and more marginalized, and some evangelistic activities even criminalized.

> **Open Doors raises prayer support for persecuted believers and for the authorities in Brunei.**

PLEASE PRAY

- That there would be increasing freedom to choose and practice one's faith in Brunei
- For God to sustain young believers who are subjected to an Islamic education
- That the Lord would enable more churches to register freely and gain legal status.



Dear Friend,

As you've seen in these pages, for your brothers and sisters in 15 countries, 2025 was the deadliest year for their faith in modern history.

The 2026 World Watch List reveals something remarkable: persecution isn't just getting worse — it's getting more creative. But what should make faith impossible keeps meeting the power of the grace of God.

We've seen it firsthand. In Somalia, family members become informants. Yet Aweis, a Somali pastor whose own father threatened to kill him for his conversion, now leads a network of secret believers across the Horn of Africa. What should have destroyed him has instead multiplied his impact through your partnership.

In North Korea, the same surveillance technology meant to eradicate faith has forced believers to develop remarkably creative ministry methods. One believer's coded message — "Our 'family' has grown to five" — represents souls saved despite the world's most sophisticated persecution system.



"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). These aren't just words to 388 million persecuted Christians worldwide — they're daily reality.

Your prayers aren't just "helping" — they're the essential connection that enables believers to stand strong. Your support provides Bibles, training and presence ministry in places where others cannot or will not go. Because of you, what seems impossible becomes unstoppable.

I invite you to pray with your family around the world. Download our prayer guide. Stand with believers who dare to share Jesus.

THEY'RE COUNTING ON YOU TO NOTICE.

THEY'RE NOT STRANGERS.

THEY'RE YOUR FAMILY.

Yours in Christ,
Ryan Brown
CEO, Open Doors US



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PERSECUTION?

Open Doors defines persecution against Christians as “any hostile action toward a person or community motivated by their identification with the person of Jesus Christ.”

Hostility takes many forms. It can be visible and violent, where churches are burned, believers attacked, Christians kidnapped and killed. But it can also be a subtler, more attritional force. Millions of Christians live in a culture of hostility and intolerance as they try to exercise their faith against a background of discrimination and injustice.

This year, persecution has evolved beyond traditional methods. In some countries, artificial intelligence monitors digital behavior patterns to identify Christians. In others, sophisticated propaganda campaigns turn communities against believers. Economic restrictions deny Christians access to employment, education and basic services.

Persecution can also be regional. This is why many countries you might consider Christian, like those in sub-Saharan Africa, can appear on the list. Nigeria, for example, has the biggest church auditoriums in the world. But that is in the south. In the northern (and increasingly, the central) regions, Christians are in a minority, and radical Islamic groups, like Boko Haram, and Fulani militants can create havoc.

This is why the real, lived, eyewitness experiences of believers remain the core of the World Watch List. Because what matters is not the official, grandiose governmental statements about freedom of belief. What matters is what really happens on the ground when people try to follow Jesus in their everyday lives — and how God enables impossible faith to flourish even in the darkest places.

You can find more details on Open Doors’ methodology and research at opendoorsus.org.

THANK YOU FOR STANDING WITH BELIEVERS WHO DARE TO SHARE JESUS

Your prayers, gifts and actions will strengthen persecuted Christians living in the countries where following Jesus comes with the greatest risk. Here are some other ways in which you can continue your journey.

KEEP ON PRAYING

Sign up for weekly emails that will inform and inspire you with news and prayer requests from the countries of the World Watch List. On the Open Doors website, you can also find a range of resources to help you and your church pray with the persecuted church.

KEEP ON SUPPORTING

Your gift can provide Bibles to believers facing extreme persecution, help rebuild shattered homes and churches and offer vital food and medicine to persecuted Christians. Whatever you give will make a difference.

KEEP ON SPEAKING OUT

Tell others what is happening. Raise your voice to those with influence and power. Tell your church about their persecuted brothers and sisters with our resources for churches.

$25

can provide Bibles and discipleship materials

$49

can provide a safe house for a North Korean family for six months

$58

can provide biblical leadership training to a man like Aweis

Join the World Watch List champions.

Tell your church, your family, your network. Help wake the American church to what's happening to our family.

MORE WORLD WATCH LIST RESOURCES

Children's Prayer Passport and Activity Map

Crammed with information and activities, this family friendly resource is a great way to help children pray for the persecuted church. Get your copy at **opendoorsus.org**.



FIND OUT MORE AT OPENDOORSUS.ORG



PRAY

JOIN YOUR FAMILY AROUND THE GLOBE

Join the world's largest underground network and stay connected to persecuted Christians around the world. Your faith will change as you engage with the courageous faith of your brothers and sisters.

Around the world, there are people who share your faith—but not your freedom.



It is good to pray for them.
It is better to pray *with* them.

The Open Doors Prayer Calendar is a resource we share every two months that passes along the prayer requests of your church family around the world. It's a way to stay up to date with what's going on in their lives, and to stand with them in the opportunities and challenges they face.

And one thing we can say with confidence: praying with them can change not only their lives, but also yours.

This year, 15 countries hit record-high violence against Christians. These aren't distant statistics — they're your brothers and sisters demonstrating impossible faith in the face of increasingly sophisticated persecution.

When you pray with them, you join a remarkable reality: where persecution should make faith impossible, God is making it unstoppable. Your prayers are essential. Your connection matters.

Download your Prayer Calendar today!

opendoorsus.org/getinvolved

Impossible faith?



It seems impossible that North Koreans could ever hear about Jesus. Yet, Open Doors fieldworkers like Cho* are meeting North Korean refugees, sharing the gospel, providing safe houses and food – and seeing the impossible happen. Will you support their ministry today?

BE PART OF GOD'S IMPOSSIBLE PLAN

Every $25 could provide safe housing, food and spiritual aid to someone who has fled extreme persecution.

Visit **opendoorsus.org** to make your gift today or call **1-800-896-5285**. Thank you.

**Name changed and re-enactment image used for security reasons*

Visit opendoorsus.org for more stories, research and prayer requests from places where Christians are facing the most extreme persecution.

Open Doors

opendoorsus.org

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