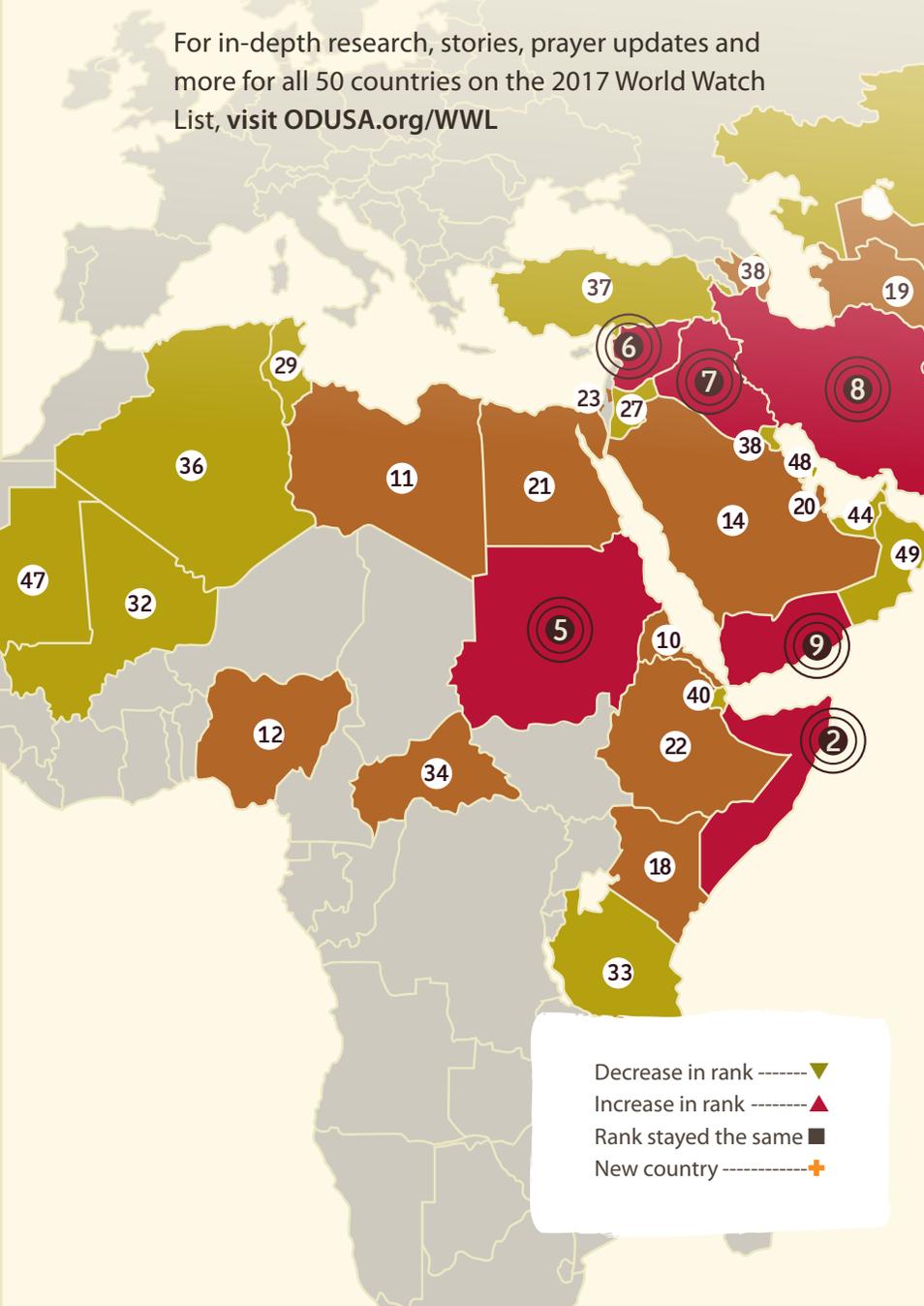


## A RANKING OF THE TOP 50 COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS FACE THE MOST SEVERE PERSECUTION FOR THEIR FAITH.

Each year, Open Doors publishes the World Watch List to highlight the plight of persecuted Christians around the world. The list represents believers in Jesus Christ who are arrested, harassed, tortured — even killed — for their faith.

For in-depth research, stories, prayer updates and more for all 50 countries on the 2017 World Watch List, visit [ODUSA.org/WWL](http://ODUSA.org/WWL)



Decrease in rank ----- ▼  
 Increase in rank ----- ▲  
 Rank stayed the same ----- ■  
 New country ----- +

COUNTRY	2017 SCORE	2016
1. North Korea	92/100	92/100
2. Somalia	91/100	87/100
3. Afghanistan	89/100	88/100
4. Pakistan	88/100	87/100
5. Sudan	87/100	84/100
6. Syria	86/100	87/100
7. Iraq	86/100	89/100
8. Iran	85/100	83/100
9. Yemen	85/100	78/100
10. Eritrea	82/100	89/100
11. Libya	78/100	79/100
12. Nigeria	78/100	78/100
13. Maldives	76/100	76/100
14. Saudi Arabia	76/100	76/100
15. India	73/100	68/100
16. Uzbekistan	71/100	70/100
17. Vietnam	71/100	66/100
18. Kenya	68/100	68/100
19. Turkmenistan	66/100	66/100
20. Qatar	65/100	65/100
21. Egypt	65/100	64/100
22. Ethiopia	64/100	67/100
23. Palestinian Terr.	64/100	62/100
24. Laos	64/100	58/100
25. Brunei	64/100	61/100
26. Bangladesh	63/100	57/100
27. Jordan	63/100	59/100
28. Myanmar	62/100	62/100
29. Tunisia	61/100	58/100
30. Bhutan	61/100	56/100
31. Malaysia	60/100	58/100
32. Mali	59/100	55/100
33. Tanzania	59/100	57/100
34. Cen. Afr. Rep.	58/100	59/100
35. Tajikistan	58/100	58/100
36. Algeria	58/100	56/100
37. Turkey	57/100	55/100
38. Kuwait	57/100	56/100
39. China	57/100	57/100
40. Djibouti	57/100	58/100
41. Mexico	57/100	56/100
42. Comoros	56/100	56/100
43. Kazakhstan	56/100	55/100
44. United Arab Em.	55/100	55/100
45. Sri Lanka	55/100	New
46. Indonesia	55/100	55/100
47. Mauritania	55/100	New
48. Bahrain	54/100	54/100
49. Oman	53/100	53/100
50. Colombia	53/100	55/100

# RANKING THE COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS EXPERIENCE THE WORST PERSECUTION

The *2017 World Watch List* uses data from Open Doors fieldworkers and independent experts to track the deep structures of Christian persecution.

It measures the degree of freedom a Christian has to live out their faith in five spheres of life — private, family, community, national and church — plus a sixth sphere measuring the degree of violence.

The data is translated into points, and countries are ranked accordingly, with the top 50 countries appearing on the list. The list is independently audited by the International Institute of Religious Freedom.

 FOR A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF THE WORLD WATCH LIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/WWLMETHODOLOGY](http://ODUSA.ORG/WWLMETHODOLOGY)

## ABOUT *OPEN DOORS*

For over 60 years, *Open Doors* has worked in the world's most oppressive countries, empowering Christians who are persecuted for their beliefs.

*Open Doors* equips persecuted Christians in more than 60 countries through programs like:



**Bible & Gospel Development**—equipping believers with a Bible or other Christian resources.



**Women & Children Advancement**—providing life-changing programs such as safe houses, job training and literacy education.



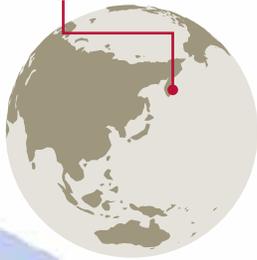
**Christian Community Restoration**—giving assistance to rebuild or providing socioeconomic relief to refugees.





# NORTH KOREA

92/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un

**Government:** Dictatorial paranoia

**Population:** 25,405,000 (300,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Communist

**Main Religion:** Atheism/traditional beliefs Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

## The Worst Place on Earth for Christians

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

Through local partners, Open Doors is serving Christians in North Korea by providing them with emergency relief aid, including food, medicine and clothes, as well as Bibles, books and other discipleship materials. Open Doors partners in China also provide shelter and aid for Christians who have fled the country, as well as training for those who wish to return to North Korea for ministry.

## Hea Woo's Story – Testifying in Prison

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



## NORTH KOREA'S PRISON CAMPS

 Kwanliso (for political prisoners)

 Kyowahso (for "reeducation")



## How You Can Pray

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

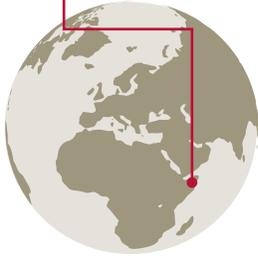


VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/NORTHKOREA](http://ODUSA.ORG/NORTHKOREA) TO LEARN, WATCH OR GIVE



# SOMALIA

91/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud **Government:** Federal Republic  
**Population:** 11,392,000 (*hundreds of Christians*) **Source of Persecution:**  
**Main Religion:** Islam Islamic Extremism, Ethnic Antagonism

## Where Martyrdom is Commonplace

Somalia has been on the World Watch List since 1993. Islam was already firmly established in Somalia before the arrival of Christianity, and as a result, life for believers is defined by hostility. Somalia’s tribal system — as an informal way of governing Somalia — is very resistant to modern government models, including democracy, which means that Christians have absolutely no voice in society. Since the downfall of Ziad Barre in 1991, Somalia has become a safe haven for Islamic militants. Christian converts from Islam in the country have been facing a great deal of persecution, and martyrdom is very common. The mere suspicion of one’s having renounced Islam leads to a rushed public execution.

To aid believers in Somalia, Open Doors works through local partners, providing underground Christians with discipleship training, Bibles and Christian books, along with community development programs and more, helping these believers to survive on the outskirts of society.



## Mohammed’s Story - No Other Option

“You are a kaffir (infidel)! You will die!” When Mohammed heard the accusation, he already knew what his friend Ahmed had found: his Bible. To Ahmed, his friend’s decision to follow Christ was deserving of death. Three nights after the discovery of the Bible, Ahmed attacked Mohammed with a knife. “I saw nothing, just felt the sudden sharp pain to my head and felt the blood streaming down my neck,” Mohammed says. By the grace of God, neighbors came to his aid. Ahmed ran away and Mohammed was taken to hospital. “Ahmed was my friend, someone I’ve known for a long time. I housed him when he had nowhere to go, and in return, I got this. It is very painful.” But as hard as this has been, Mohammed has not given up his faith. “It is the only place where I have ever had inner peace. Despite the isolation and persecution, I am at peace. This is why I hold on to Christ. Going back to Islam is not an option.”



**AL-SHABAAB, AN ISLAMIC MILITANT GROUP BASED IN SOMALIA, HAS ALSO CARRIED OUT ATTACKS IN KENYA, ETHIOPIA, DJIBOUTI AND UGANDA, OFTEN TARGETING CHRISTIANS.**

## How You Can Pray

Pray for Christians in Somalia who risk martyrdom if their faith is discovered and struggle with keeping it to themselves. Pray that they would have wisdom and discernment in sharing the gospel with others, along with a quiet boldness and sense of God’s presence with them.

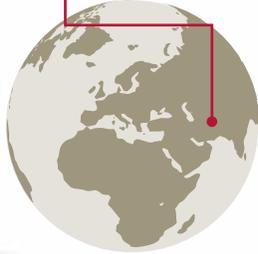


VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/SOMALIA](http://ODUSA.ORG/SOMALIA) TO LEARN, WATCH OR GIVE

3

# AFGHANISTAN

89/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Ashraf Ghani

**Population:** 34,169,000 (*thousands of Christians*)

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Republic

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression, Organized Corruption and Crime

## When It Costs Everything to Follow Christ

Christians in Afghanistan experience extreme persecution. Severe pressure on believers, resulting from Islamic oppression, is exerted mostly by families, friends and community, but also by local religious leaders. The state authorities are weak, and Islam is viewed as a welcome unifying factor, especially as society agrees that conversion away from Islam cannot be tolerated. Many who convert from Islam to Christianity are murdered once their extended families learn of their new faith. In other families, Christian converts are delivered to mental hospitals under the premise that no one in their right mind would ever choose to leave Islam. In any case, converts usually lose their rights to personal property and possessions, effectively leaving them destitute. This can occur even upon the mere suspicion of conversion — a fear tactic that leads family members to react all the more harshly in curbing even the slightest hints of interest in Christianity.

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

## Miracles

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

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



## How You Can Pray

Pray for believers in Afghanistan who lack fellowship, especially new converts who fear telling anyone about their faith in Christ. Also, pray for those who lose worldly possessions to persecution when they gain eternal life. Pray that they would be able to forgive their persecutors to the glory of God.

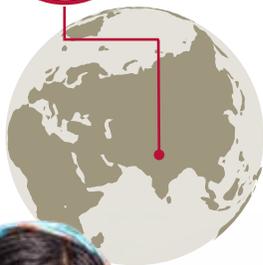


VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/AFGHANISTAN](https://www.odusa.org/afghanistan) TO LEARN, WATCH OR GIVE



# PAKISTAN

88/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 196,744,000 (3,938,000 Christians)

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression, Organized Corruption

## Unjust Treatment, Violent Attacks

There are multiple groups of Christians experiencing persecution in Pakistan. Historical Christian communities exist openly, but have to put up with stringent rules and constant monitoring, while Christian converts from Islam suffer the brunt of persecution from both radical Islamic groups and families and neighbors. Protestant Christian communities are under close scrutiny and suffer frequent attacks, especially when they are active in outreach amongst Muslims. Violent persecution is common. Christians are targets for murder, bombings, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages and eviction from home and country. Unjust and arbitrary blasphemy laws are used to punish Christians and prevent evangelism.

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

### Pray for Pakistan

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

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



# SUDAN

87/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Omar al-Bashir

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 42,166,000 (1,996,000 Christians)

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

## Persecution and Sectarian Strife

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

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

### Pray for Sudan

+ Pray for Sudanese Christians who risk all for the sake of the gospel, evangelizing and preaching to those around them in spite of the risks.

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





# SYRIA

86/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Bashar al-Assad

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 18,907,000 (794,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:**

**Main Religion:** Islam

Islamic Oppression, Ethnic Antagonism

## Persecution and Civil War

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

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

### Pray for Syria

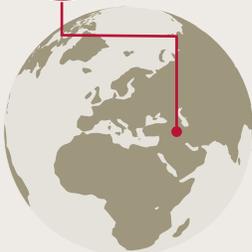
- + Pray for believers in Syria who haven't fled the country. Pray that they would be used as strong witnesses of Christ's love to fellow Syrians.

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



# IRAQ

86/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi

**Government:** Parliamentary Democracy

**Population:** 38,654,000 (230,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

**Main Religion:** Islam

## Near Extinction

Christians have lived in Iraq for two millennia but are currently on the verge of extinction. Many have fled areas controlled by IS and other Islamic extremists. The overall persecution situation in Iraq is characterized by impunity, the threat of attacks and second class treatment by the authorities. Historical Christian communities and Protestant Christian communities are seriously affected by persecution, especially from radical Islamic movements, authorities and non-Christian leaders. Communities of converts to Christianity from Islam suffer severely from persecution, especially at the hands of family, but also from the above mentioned persecutors if their faith is known.

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

### Pray for Iraq

- + Pray for Iraqi believers who are attempting to rebuild their lives after being forced from their homes by ISIS.

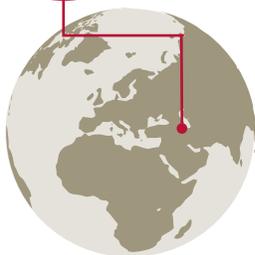
**VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/IRAQ](http://ODUSA.ORG/IRAQ) FOR MORE**



8

# IRAN

85/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 80,946,000 (800,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

**Main Religion:** Islam

## A Threat from the West

In Iran, Christianity is considered a Western influence and a threat to the Islamic identity of the Republic. Converts to Christianity from Islam make up the largest group of Christians and experience the most persecution. Other Protestant Christian communities who evangelize Muslims are the second most persecuted group. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians from Asia and the West sometimes experience forced church closures, while historical Christian communities made up of Armenian and Assyrian Christians are protected by law but are treated as second-class citizens. Arrest and violence are commonplace for anyone engaged in Christian ministry or evangelism. Open Doors supports Christians in the Persian Speaking World with Bible and literature distribution, training, media projects, advocacy and more.

### Pray for Iran

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

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



9

# YEMEN

85/100 EXTREME PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 28,120,000  
(a few thousand Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression,  
Ethnic Antagonism

**Main Religion:** Islam

## War and Islamic Extremists

For the most part, only converts to Christianity from Islam remain in Yemen, as communities of expatriate or migrant Christians (from the West, Africa and Asia) have left due to the devastating war in which civilians bear the brunt of the violence. But reports show that more Muslims are turning to Christ in Yemen than ever before. Sunni militant groups like al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) are using the chaos of war to gain territory, often targeting Christian believers. The country has seen political turmoil and violence since 2012 when the former president was ousted. Meanwhile, Yemen is facing a dire humanitarian crisis. 80% of the population is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance and more than half of the population is food insecure, making Yemen's hunger crisis one of the worst in the world — one in which believers are at the greatest risk due to their being ostracized from society.

### Pray for Yemen

+ Please pray for believers in Yemen who are facing intense fear because Islamic extremist groups threaten them.

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



10

# ERITREA

82/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Isaias Afwerki  
**Population:** 5,482,000 (2,741,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam, Christianity

**Government:** One-party State  
**Source of Persecution:** Dictatorial Paranoia, Islamic Oppression, Denominational Protectionism



## Shipping Container Prisons

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

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

### Pray for Eritrea

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

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

11

# LIBYA

78/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** Prime Minister Fayeze Sarraj  
**Population:** 6,409,000 (20,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Transitional  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression



## Anarchy and Persecution

Libya is still mired in the conflict and chaos that have engulfed the nation since Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime was toppled in 2011. The country had since then been in a state of anarchy with various militant groups controlling different parts of the country. The persecution situation in Libya is fueled by the state of anarchy in the country and the violent conflict in which Islamic militias are active, resulting in the persecution of both Libyan converts to Christianity from Islam and expatriate Christians. Both experience extreme pressure and high levels of violence. The impunity of those who perpetrate violent attacks against Christians exacerbates the problem.

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

### Pray for Libya

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

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



# NIGERIA

78/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Muhammadu Buhari

**Government:** Federal Republic

**Population:** 191,836,000 (95,918,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

**Main Religion:** Islam, Christianity

## Brutal Violence

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

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

## Pray for Nigeria

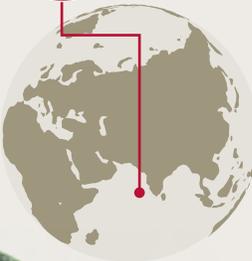
- + Pray for Christians who have lost loved ones to attacks by Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, and for the faith of all Nigerian Christians.

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



# MALDIVES

76/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Abdulla Yameen

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 376,000 (a few thousand Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression,

**Main Religion:** Islam

Dictatorial Paranoia

## A False Paradise

The Maldives, world renowned as a vacation destination of choice, are actually a place of intense persecution for Christians. Extreme pressure in all facets of life is a daily reality for the country's Christians, who are at odds with the strict form of Islam that dominates it both politically and culturally. Freedom of religion is restricted, as the "protection of religion" enumerated in the country's constitution is purely understood to mean the protection of Islam. Every Maldivian must be Muslim, according to authorities. Communities of expatriate Christians are closely monitored and have meeting restrictions, while converts to Christianity from Islam bear the worst of the persecution. They aren't even officially recognized as existing in the country and cannot have any contact with the (mostly Indian and Sri Lankan) expatriate churches.

## Pray for the Maldives

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

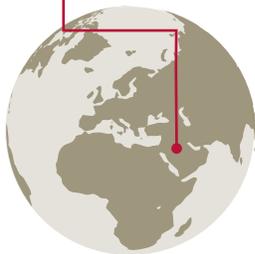
**VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/MALDIVES](http://ODUSA.ORG/MALDIVES) FOR MORE**



14

# SAUDI ARABIA

76/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud  
**Population:** 32,743,000 (1,406,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Monarchy  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

## Defined by Islam

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



## Pray for Saudi Arabia

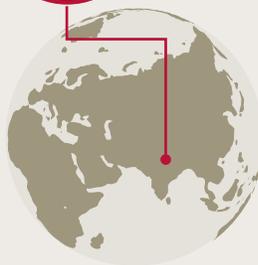
+ Pray that Christians in Saudi Arabia would be bold in ministering to their Muslim families, neighbors and friends. Pray that they would be comforted.

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

15

# INDIA

73/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi  
**Population:** 1,342,513,000  
(63,970,000 Christians)

**Main Religion:** Hinduism  
**Government:** Federal Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Religious Nationalism

## A Hindu Nation

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

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

## Pray for India

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

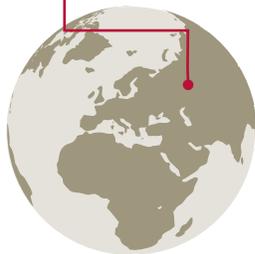
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/INDIA FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/INDIA FOR MORE)



16

# UZBEKISTAN

71/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Shavkat Mirziyoyev  
**Population:** 30,691,000 (350,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Authoritarian Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Dictatorial Paranoia, Post-communist Oppression

## Constantly Watched

In Uzbekistan, converts to Christianity from Islam bear the brunt of persecution. Protestant Christian communities also suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines. Uzbek President Islam Karimov died on September 2, 2016, and was quickly succeeded by Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyaev. This means that for Christians, little, if anything, will change. Post-communist oppression continues, with the government bugging homes, tapping phones, infiltrating groups with spies and visiting church services. Raids on house church groups, confiscation of religious materials, interrogation and detention of believers also continue. Pressure and violence against Christian converts from family, friends and local communities are likely to continue, as well, if not increase.

To support persecuted believers in Uzbekistan, Open Doors works through local partners to provide biblical and ministry training, medical assistance, socio-economic development, children and youth seminars and more.

### Pray for Uzbekistan

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

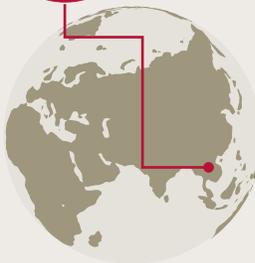
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/UZBEKISTAN FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/UZBEKISTAN FOR MORE)



17

# VIETNAM

71/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Tran Dai Quang  
**Population:** 95,415,000 (8,368,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Buddhism

**Government:** Communist State  
**Source of Persecution:** Communist Oppression, Ethnic Antagonism

## Historical Communities Face Persecution

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

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

### Pray for Vietnam

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

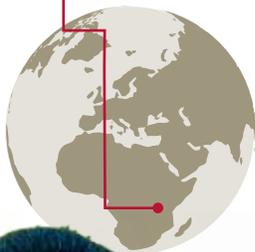
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/VIETNAM FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/VIETNAM FOR MORE)



18

# KENYA

68/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Uhuru Kenyatta

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 48,467,000 (39,742,900 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic Oppression

**Main Religion:** Christianity

## Islamic Oppression in Kenya

Over the past three years, the level of persecution in Kenya has been increasing, and it doesn't seem to be slowing anytime soon. The main source of persecution for Christians in Kenya is Islamic oppression - as perpetrated by al-Shabaab and other militant groups. Violent attacks on Christians by Islamic militants in northeastern and coastal Kenya have had a ripple effect on Christian communities throughout the country. Kenya is a country with a Christian majority (82%) and a considerably smaller Muslim population (10-15%). Yet, in areas dominated by Islam, Christians are targets for persecution. Unfortunately, the corruption of public institutions is rampant, which limits protections for persecuted believers. To support persecuted Christians in Kenya, Open Doors works through local partners to provide evangelism and discipleship training, economic assistance, leadership and management training for churches, trauma care training and more.



### Pray for Kenya

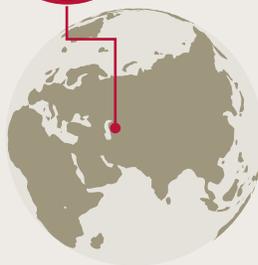
- + Pray that Kenyan Christians living in areas with large Muslim populations would have a desire to share their faith with their neighbors and friends.

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

19

# TURKMENISTAN

66/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow

**Government:** One-party state

**Population:** 5,503,000 (8,368,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:**

**Main Religion:** Islam

Dictatorial paranoia/Islamic extremism

## Christianity in One of the Most Restrictive Places

Turkmenistan is considered to be one of the most restrictive places in the world. There is no freedom of information or press. It is made extremely difficult for foreigners to access the country. A new personality cult has been started around President Berdymukhammedov. Additionally, there is a high level of monitoring of each and every group in society (including Christians) as well as a highly restricted access to foreign media and resources. Consequently, it is also difficult to get information out of the country. Security forces also heavily monitor Christians, which can lead to fear and lack of community. A story we shared with you from May 2016 highlighted a believer who was asked to resign because of her Christian faith shows how little freedom of faith there is in this nation.



### Pray for Turkmenistan

- + Pray for Christians being wire-tapped to exercise discretion in their communications and for Muslim-background believers (MBBs) who are pressured to return to Islam.

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

20

# QATAR

65/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani **Government:** Republic  
**Population:** 2,338,000 (210,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism  
**Main Religion:** Islam



## Immigrants Face Trials

90% of Qatar's population of about two million is made up of migrant laborers. These migrant workers come from places like Sri Lanka and the Philippines. The Qataris (10%) enjoy the highest GDP per capita in the world. Expatriates and migrant workers are generally perceived and treated by Qataris as slaves. Forced labor and human trafficking are major problems. Working conditions for migrant workers can be inhumane and dangerous; they face underpayment, domestic violence, sexual abuse and lack proper living conditions. It is not uncommon for them to die at their work place from heat stroke or exhaustion. Believers are subject to the death penalty in this nation. This nation, home to Al Jazeera news agency, also has the lowest illiteracy rate in the Arab world.

### Pray for Qatar

- + Pray for Christian migrant workers to show the love of Christ and for Christian converts that cannot share their faith with Muslim family members.

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

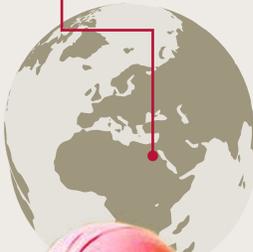


21

# EGYPT

65/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi **Government:** Republic  
**Population:** 95,215,000 (9,521,500 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism  
**Main Religion:** Islam



## Unity in the Coptic Minority

President al-Sisi's authoritarian style of government has to some extent restored the rule of law in Egypt, but also implies a stricter compliance with the relatively restrictive legislation related to religious affairs. This is not in the advantage of the country's Christian population. The large Coptic minority, while facing important difficulties, has been tolerated because of its historical presence and its demographic size. In recent years this has changed, however, causing historical Christian communities to be targeted as well. There is a small but growing community of Christian converts (Muslim Background Believers, MBBs), who bear the brunt of persecution, most often from family members. Believers are often kicked out of their homes when their Muslim families find out about their faith.

### Pray for Egypt

- + Pray that God would bring Islamist leaders to Christ. Pray for Christians slighted in social, political and legal affairs to entrust their situation to God.

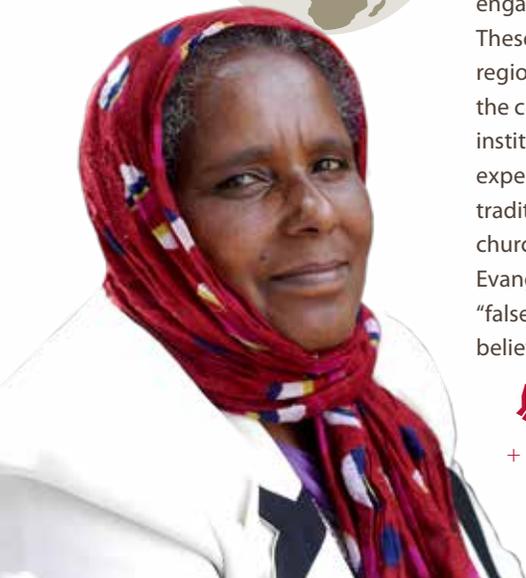
VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/EGYPT](http://ODUSA.ORG/EGYPT) FOR MORE



22

## ETHIOPIA

64/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



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

### Unprecedented Political Unrest

Ethiopia has a long history with both Christianity and Islam, and over time, both religions have engaged in attempts to expand their sphere of influence. Additionally, Ethiopia has many tribes. These are not necessarily favorable to Christianity, and in some places like Afar and the Somali regions, tribes are interconnected with Islam. The ruling party in the country has blocked all the channels for freedom of expression and assembly, and has also tried to control all religious institutions in a bid to curb dissent. Amidst all of this, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) experiences a great deal of difficulty trying to reconcile itself with the growing number of both traditional and non-traditional Protestants in Ethiopia and reform-oriented groups within the church itself. Fanatical groups within the EOC use inflammatory rhetoric against Protestants/Evangelicals in their magazines, websites and newspapers, using such expressions as “newcomers”, “false prophets” and “menafikan” (deniers of Virgin Mary and the saints) to portray them as non-believers. In recent years, this nation has seen unprecedented levels of political unrest.

### Pray for Ethiopia

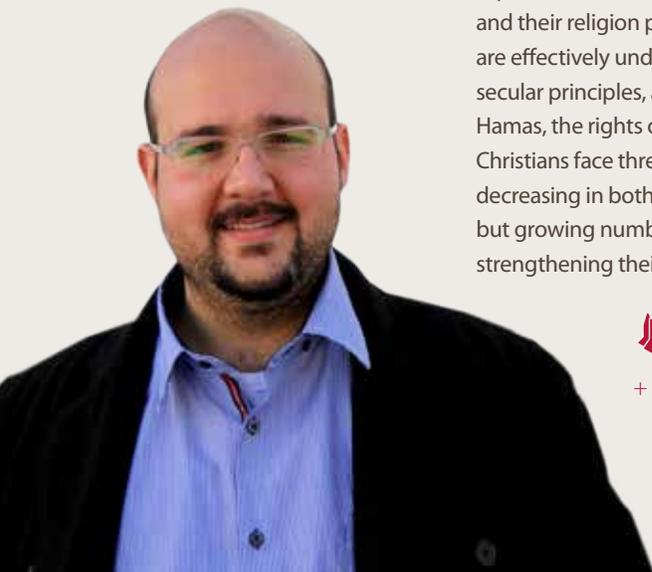
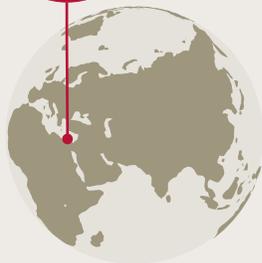
- + Pray for a wave of biblical reform within the churches claiming Christ in Ethiopia and for God to reveal the Truth to Ethiopian government officials.

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

23

## PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

64/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



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

### Believers Face Regional Conflict

The dynamics of Christian persecution in the Palestinian Territories are complex. Christians are squeezed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, their ethnicity causing many restrictions from the Israeli side and their religion putting them in a minority position within the Palestinian community. The territories are effectively under different governments. The West Bank’s ruling Fatah party is formally based on secular principles, and Christians enjoy several rights. Though Christians are largely tolerated by Islamist Hamas, the rights of Christians are neither upheld nor protected in Gaza. Apart from this discrimination, Christians face threats from radical Islamic vigilante groups. The total number of Christians has been decreasing in both areas over time due to emigration and lower birth rates. A ray of hope is the small but growing number of converts from Islam to Christianity. The church here has tried to focus on strengthening their youth to allow persecution to strengthen their faith, not destroy it.

### Pray for Palestinian Territories

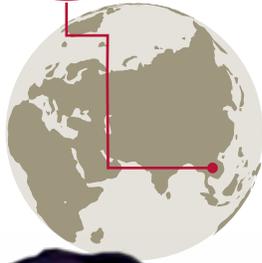
- + Pray for Christians here to shine as lights in the midst of the conflict and for those in fear of repercussions of their faith.

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

24

# LAOS

64/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Choummaly Sayasone  
**Population:** 7,038,000 (225,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Buddhism

**Government:** Communist state  
**Source of Persecution:** Tribal antagonism

## Corruption in the “Free Press”

Laos has been in the tight grip of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party since 1975. Its exclusive network of party members’ families and friends adds to the pressure felt by Lao citizens, especially minorities. The country also has a complete lack of freedom of expression, let alone a free press to highlight cases of corruption. Buddhist temples are the centers of social and religious life, and most Lao men are expected to spend some time serving in a temple. This shows how deeply ingrained Buddhism is in the thinking and culture of society. Although it is often mixed with animistic beliefs and practices, every deviation from it is unthinkable and perceived as dangerous. Therefore, Christians refusing to participate in Buddhist practices are perceived as foreign and a threat to traditional culture. Witnessing to Buddhist neighbors and family can be a huge challenge, but believers here are boldly living out their faith.



### Pray for Laos

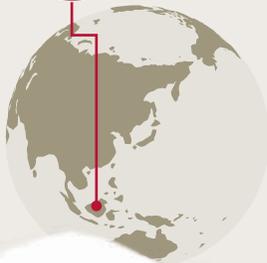
- + Pray for Christians who have nowhere to read the Bible without being watched and for older Christians to take the initiative in discipling new believers.

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

25

# BRUNEI

64/100 VERY HIGH PERSECUTION

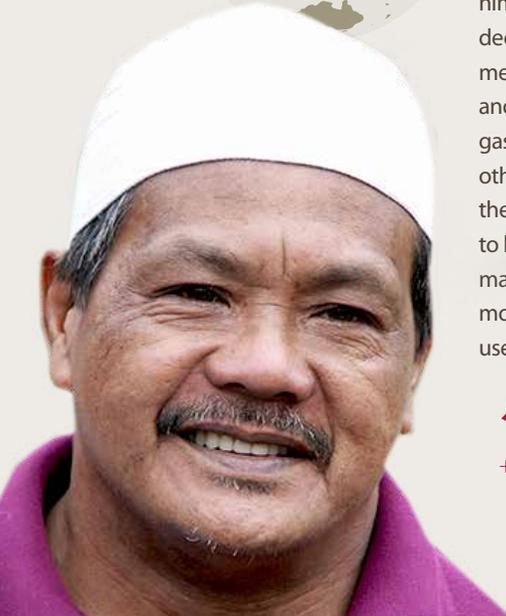


**Leader:** Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah  
**Population:** 434,000 (54,800 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Constitutional Sultanate  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Political Reverence Provides Persecution

Brunei has been a sultanate for more than 600 years, and all important positions are still held by the Sultan himself, including prime minister, finance minister, minister of the interior and head of religion. People deeply revere and respect him and any criticism is seen as unacceptable. His government provides free medical services and subsidizes goods such as rice and housing. There are no school fees for state schools, and citizens of Brunei do not have to pay income tax. His politics are based on revenues from large oil and gas fields, covering 90 percent of the government’s GDP. Most of the citizens have never lived under any other system. Even the sultan’s announcement of introducing Sharia penal law in May 2014 did not change the peoples’ affection for him. The second phase encompassing corporal punishments was supposed to begin in May 2015, but has been delayed due to international pressure. Minorities like Christians, who make up 16 percent of the population, are feeling increased pressure, since the sultan leans more and more towards conservative Islam. This seems to give the tiny and rather young state an identity, possibly used as a uniting factor in preparation for the time when the country runs out of oil and gas.



### Pray for Brunei

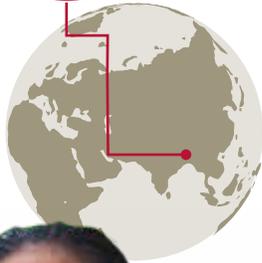
- + Pray for opportunities for Christians to gather together in prayer and fellowship. Pray that Muslim families would encounter Christ while persecuting Christian family members.

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

26

# BANGLADESH

63/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Abdul Hamid

**Government:** Parliamentary democracy

**Population:** 164,828,000 (866,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

**Main Religion:** Islam

## Islamic Beliefs Put Pressure on Christians

The constitution of Bangladesh includes freedom of religion, and the country does not have blasphemy laws or an anti-conversion bill. Yet the constitution also confirms that the state religion is Islam, and the government is known to give in to Islamic pressure. Additionally, there are fatwas implemented all over the country, especially in rural areas, and there are demands to introduce Sharia law in order to show that the country belongs to the "House of Islam." As the Christian minority is growing, it faces more and more restrictions and challenges. This pressure is not driven by the government, but by radical Islamic groups, local religious leaders and families. The competition between the large political parties of the country is also a factor, as the government is pressured to give in to demands from Islamic groups taking to the streets in protest.

### Pray for Bangladesh

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

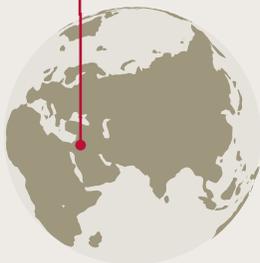
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/BANGLADESH FOR MORE)



27

# JORDAN

63/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** King Abdullah II

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy

**Population:** 7,877,000 (169,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism/

**Main Religion:** Islam

Tribal antagonism

## Home of Refugees and Persecution

Jordanian society is multi-ethnic – a phenomenon which is also reflected by the monarchy. Jordan hosts large groups of refugees, mostly from Iraq and Syria, which leads to economic, political and religious pressure, all of which is potentially destabilizing. The number of Christians in the country has been declining for half a century. For a long time, Jordan was one of the most liberal countries in the region in terms of freedom of religion. However, the tide seems to be turning for Christians – especially for Christian converts from a Muslim background (MBBs) who suffer the most persecution. Believers here often face interrogations from police or even abduction by family members.

### Pray for Jordan

- + Pray that the refugee crisis would allow many to hear the gospel and for Muslims to be struck by Jesus' love and be drawn to him.

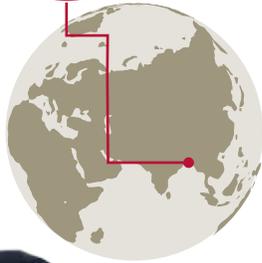
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/JORDAN FOR MORE)



28

# MYANMAR

62/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Thein Sein

**Government:** Unitary constitutional republic

**Population:** 54,836,000 (4,369,000 Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Religious nationalism

**Main Religion:** Buddhism

## Harsh Treatment for Minorities and Believers

Indigenous Rohingya believers face harsh treatment. These people are internally displaced, which has created ethnic and religious tension. Myanmar also recently saw its first free and fair elections in 25 years, which saw a landslide win for the opposition under Aung San Suu Kyi. Most ethnic minority parties did not win seats in the new parliament, so it will likely include less Christians than before. During the campaign and elections, the Burmese army continued its attacks against ethnic minorities in Kachin and Shan State, even though a ceasefire agreement was signed. Christians are strongly affected by such attacks and the level of violence is high. Additionally, an organization of Buddhist radical monks (Ma Ba Tha) increased their campaigns against religious minorities and successfully helped introduce four laws for the "Protection of Race and Religion", building insurmountable hurdles for conversions and religiously mixed marriages.

### Pray for Myanmar

- + Pray for persecuted Christian minorities to minister to persecuted Rohingya Muslims and that the Holy Spirit would strengthen believers who are attacked for their faith.

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



29

# TUNISIA

61/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Mohamed Beji Caid Essebsi **Government:** Republic

**Population:** 11,495,000 (23,500 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

**Main Religion:** Islam

## Increased Oppression in Tunisia

Persecution of Christians in Tunisia is markedly higher than last year. This includes a slight increase in violence. It suggests the regime is tightening its grip. Persecution is strongest in the private, national and church spheres. This is typical for a situation in which dictatorial paranoia is the leading persecution engine. Persecution in Tunisia is increasingly shaped by Islamic extremism. Pressure on Christians is highest in the family sphere, followed by the private, church and community spheres. The terrorist attacks aimed at tourists this year spread fear among the country's Christian population. Although they do not only target Christians, the presence of Islamic terrorists has a severe psychological impact on them. Believers feel like the outcasts in a largely Muslim society. They seek community, but often at the cost of their lives.

### Pray for Tunisia

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

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



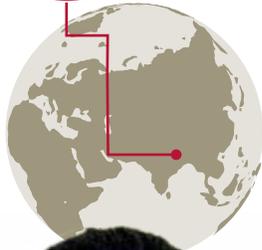
30

# BHUTAN

61/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

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

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy  
**Source of Persecution:** Religious nationalism



## Stuck Between China and India

Bhutan is stuck between two giant neighbors: India to its south and China to its north. It does not often appear in international headlines, but gained some fame for its invention of the Gross National Happiness product in order to measure its citizens' overall well-being. Politically, not much has changed in Bhutan as of late, where democracy seems to be establishing firmer roots, albeit in a climate in which all parties agree with the dominance of Buddhism and the king is cherished. The situation of Christians has remained stable, which means that they continue to lack any formal status or recognition and are persecuted for not adhering to the Buddhist national heritage.



### Pray for Bhutan

- + Pray for Christians who are cut off from water supplies and for believers who violate the anti-conversion law by leaving the Buddhist faith.

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

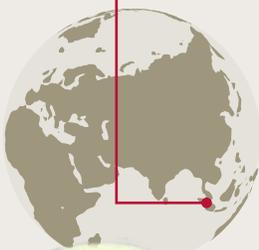
31

# MALAYSIA

60/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

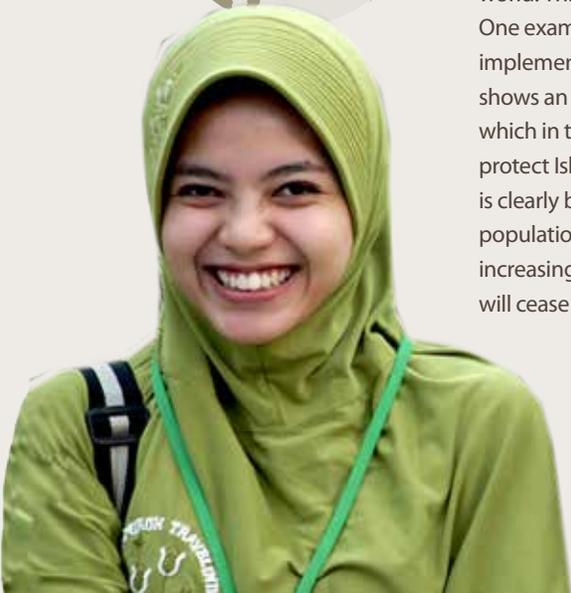
**Leader:** Prime Minister Najib Razak  
**Population:** 31,164,000 (2,865,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism



## Tolerant and Yet Islamic

Malaysia is still known as probably the best role model of a liberal and tolerant Islamic country in the world. This image is increasingly fading, especially given incidents that have occurred over the past year. One example of this is the effort to introduce Sharia penal law (hudud) in the federal state of Kelantan. Its implementation requires amendments to the federal law, so the introduction is still pending, but it clearly shows an increasing Islamic conservatism. The opposition parties even split over this issue in June 2015, which in the long term might mean that Islamic parties currently opposed to each other might unite to protect Islam. Observers are calling the Malaysian society increasingly racist, as the ethnic Malay majority is clearly being favored, while the Chinese and Indian ethnicities (as well as the indigenous tribal population) living in the eastern part of Malaysia are discriminated against. Malaysia has witnessed an increasing political, social and religious instability recently, and there are no signs that these developments will cease any time soon.



### Pray for Malaysia

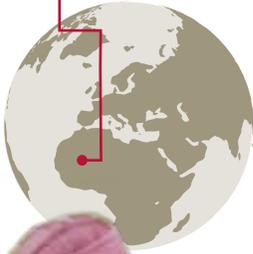
- + Pray for new believers who are kicked out of their homes or sent to Islamic re-education camps.

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

32

# MALI

59/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita  
**Population:** 18,690,000 (448,600 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Islamic Radicalism in Mali

Mali took a swift and unfortunate rise on the World Watch List this year, going from #44 to #32. This is directly linked with Islamic radicalism and violence. Since the Islamist takeover of northern Mali in mid-2012 and the subsequent French-led effort to restore Malian authority to the entire country in early 2013, civil liberties and political rights have yet to return to pre-2012 levels in both the north and south of the country. With a recent peace deal, the question is whether the peace deal will work, considering earlier peace deals have all failed. Mali gained international attention in August 2015 when Islamist gunmen sieged a hotel in the central town of Sevare and killed 13 people, highlighting the rise of radical Islam in the country.

### Pray for Mali

- + Pray for Christians who were displaced from their homes in northern Mali by Islamic militants. Pray that opposition towards Christians would not deter them from loving their neighbors.

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



33

# TANZANIA

59/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



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

**Government:** Democratic republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Violent Militant Movements in Tanzania

Understanding the situation for Christians in Tanzania requires an insight into various sociological, historical and political events in the country. The Island of Zanzibar has had a very long connection with Islam and other Muslim countries, and it was ruled by a sultanate until the British occupation from 1890 to 1963. Tanzania then became a socialist country from 1961 to 1987. The militant movements in Somalia and Kenya are presently having a serious impact on the country. For example, Tanzanian security forces arrested 10 suspected al-Shabaab militants and discovered bomb-making materials during the raid of a mosque. It should also be noted that the population of the Zanzibar Archipelago is mainly Muslim, and many in the region think they are being purposely and systematically deprived of development opportunities by Tanzania's central government. The inclusion of the Sharia court provision in the constitution would only worsen the situation, the debate over which has already divided the nation. Amongst the significant persecution, Tanzania was struck by a significant earthquake in September 2016, so believers here have had to deal with physical loss on top of persecution.

### Pray for Tanzania

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

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



34

# CENTRAL AFRICAN REP.

58/100

HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza **Government:** Transitional government  
**Population:** 5,099,000 (3,772,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism  
**Main Religion:** Christianity (mainly Roman Catholic)

## Extremists Create Persecution

CAR dropped a bit on the World Watch List this year, from #26 to #34, yet violence has only decreased slightly. The recent conflict in Central African Republic (CAR) has claimed thousands of lives, displaced hundreds of thousands of others and caused severe destruction of property. Although the Séléka have now been driven out of many parts in the country, numerous challenges remain. In the northeast, Christians are forced to flee from their villages and are denied access to farming fields. Large groups of Christians live in extremely poor conditions in refugee camps. While there is a significant Christian population, Fulani herdsman and Muslim extremists create significant persecution to believers. We reported to you of the killing of 26 by Seleka rebels in September 2016, and 4 dead after a UN protest in October 2016; believers in this nation are continuing to feel the 'squeeze and smash' of persecution.

### Pray for Central African Republic

- + Pray for opportunities to witness to Fulani herdsman and Muslim terrorists. Pray for Christians to know God's faithfulness in the midst of earthly chaos.

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

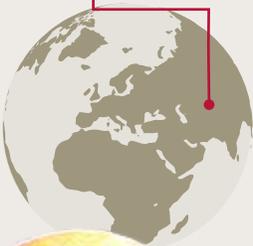


35

# TAJKISTAN

58/100

HIGH PERSECUTION



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

## Believers Face Dictatorial Paranoia

Persecution and pressure on Christians has decreased slightly from last year. Persecution is strongest in the private, national and church spheres. This is typical for a situation in which dictatorial paranoia is the leading persecution engine. Pressure from Islamic extremism is present mostly in the private, family and community spheres and is exerted by the social environment, while dictatorial paranoia – pressure from the regime – is felt mostly in the private, national and church spheres. Open Doors is working in this region to provide safe-houses.

### Pray for Tajikistan

- + Pray for Christians who renounce their faith under pressure from their families. Pray for wisdom for believers who know they are under surveillance by authorities.

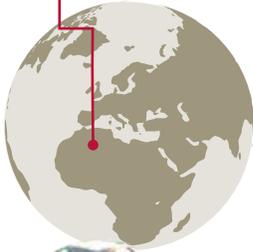
VISIT [ODUSA.ORG/TAJKISTAN](http://ODUSA.ORG/TAJKISTAN) FOR MORE





# ALGERIA

58/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



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

**Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Where Sharia Law Holds Strong

Over the years, Algeria remains constant on the World Watch List. In the context of the growing role of Islamism in the region, Algeria is increasingly the scene of Islamist terror movements, particularly al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Almost all Christians in Algeria are from a Muslim background. The law prohibits public assembly for purposes of practicing a faith other than Islam. Catholic churches, however, including a cathedral in Algiers (the seat of the Archbishop), conduct services without government interference, as does one Protestant church. In September of 2016, a believer was charged with blasphemy against Islam and its prophet on social media, which has yet to be resolved.



### Pray for Algeria

- + Pray for Christian converts who face domestic violence and house arrest for their faith. Pray that as believers are abused, their witness would remain.

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



# TURKEY

57/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



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

**Government:** Parliamentary republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism/  
Religious nationalism

## Radicalism Meets Politics

Turkey's rank on the World Watch List rose sharply this year, from #45 to #37. There are three notable trends in Turkey at the moment: the presence of radical Islam, the ethnic conflict and the changing political scene. Each of these trends are linked to each other, and all of them will affect Christians in Turkey. Persecution in Turkey is shaped by Islamic extremism, and is increasingly marked by violence. Pressure on believers from Muslim backgrounds is especially acute due to the Islamic social environment. Increasing pressure on Christians is fueled by Turkish nationalism and a regime that aims to Islamize the country. Suicide bombers attacked Istanbul Airport in July 2016, which has been an area of historically strong Christian strongholds, which is just one example of how persecution is significantly increasing in Turkey.



### Pray for Turkey

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

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

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# KUWAIT

57/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Emir Sheikh Al-Sabah  
**Population:** 3.4 million (420,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Moderate  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism/  
Dictatorial paranoia

## Kuwait's Government Puts Pressure on Believers

More than half of the population is made up of immigrants, a significant number of whom are Christians. Kuwaiti society is conservative and Islam (sharia law) prescribes a wide range of rules for personal, family and community life. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is full of contradictions: On the one hand, it provides for religious freedom, but also states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. The government has been using the traditional conservative tribal society of the country to eliminate the liberal and leftist groups, and has so far been very successful. In the process, other religious minorities were also seriously affected. Kuwait has accepted some of the major United Nations conventions on human rights, like the 1996 Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Islamic State has been trying to establish its network in the country.

### Pray for Kuwait

- + Pray for the expatriate/migrant Christian communities who continue to struggle to obtain registration permits.

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



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# CHINA

57/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Xi Jinping  
**Population:** 1.37 billion (85 million Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Atheism

**Government:** Socialism  
**Source of Persecution:** Communist oppression

## China's Minorities Face Restrictions

A considerable part of persecution targets the small convert minorities among the Tibetans and the Muslim Uighurs, but Christians among the main Han majority face increasing restrictions too. The campaign of breaking down crosses in the Zhejiang province has ended, but church meetings continued to be disrupted in several provinces. The new NGO law and the new draft regulations on religion are signs for tightening control on Christians in particular. As Christians are the largest social force in China not controlled by the Communist Party, there are increasing efforts to bring them under state control. Historical Christian communities (including government-controlled churches) and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are monitored and limited in their freedom of religion, the communities of converts to Christianity - very small groups of Christian converts from Muslim or Tibetan background - are particularly targeted.

### Pray for China

- + Pray for Christians, who like other civilians have seen a reduction in freedom in all sectors of society, but face even more persecution for their faith.

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



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# DJIBOUTI

57/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Ismail Omar Guelleh  
**Population:** 828,324 (49,700 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism/  
Dictatorial paranoia



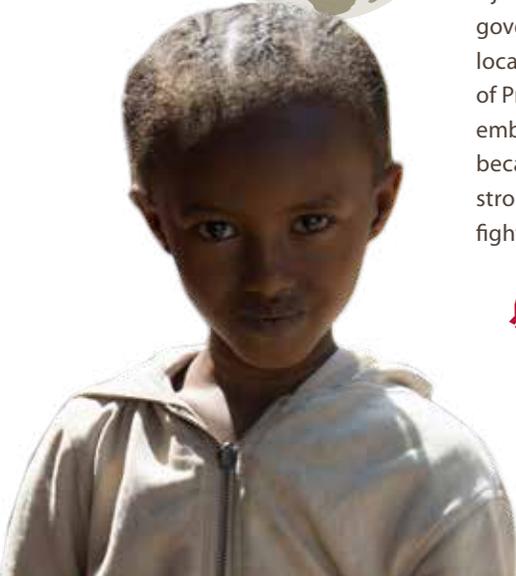
## Surrounded By Volatile Countries

Djibouti is located in the Horn of Africa. It is surrounded by volatile countries with repressive governments like Eritrea, Somalia and Yemen. The country has a very favorable geographical location along one of the busiest shipping routes. The country is run by the authoritarian regime of President Ismail Omer Guelleh who has been in power since 1999. Historically, Islam is deeply embedded in Djibouti's society. Christianity has existed in Djibouti for many centuries, partly because of its ties with Ethiopia. But most Djiboutians are conservative Sunni- Muslims and have strong family ties in Somalia and Yemen. The Djiboutian government supports Western efforts to fight Islamic militancy. Constitutionally, Islam is the state religion.

### Pray for Djibouti

- + Pray for Christians, as Islamic oppression, dictatorial paranoia and ethnic antagonism will remain the main challenges for them.

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



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# MEXICO

57/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Enrique Pena Nieto  
**Population:** 122.3 million  
(120 million Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Christianity

**Government:** Federal republic  
**Source of Persecution:**  
Organized corruption



## Persecution Close to Home

Mexico is home to three of the four WWL categories of Christianity: Historical Christian communities, communities of converts to Christianity (where converts may be from an indigenous or mafia background) and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities. All suffer persecution but there are differences between the persecution engines. Organized corruption and crime affects all Christians but particularly those who actively engage in social transformation and therefore constitute a threat to drug cartels and other criminal groups. The persecution engine Ethnic antagonism focuses mainly on the situation for those converting from indigenous traditional beliefs to non-traditional Protestant denominations, but members of the Catholic Renewal Movement have also been targeted. Secular intolerance affects all Christian communities. Denominational protectionism affects all non-traditional forms of Christianity.

### Pray for Mexico

- + Pray for believers in Mexico, as the levels of violence against them are extreme.

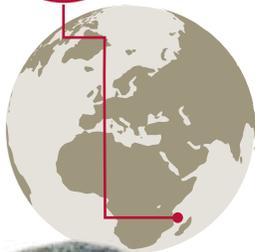
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/MEXICO FOR MORE](http://ODUSA.ORG/MEXICO)



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# COMOROS

56/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



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

**Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Sunni Islam Creates Volatile Environment for Christianity

This Indian Ocean island nation has been listed since the first WWL 1993. The Sunni majority nation has adopted a constitution that declares (Sunni) Islam to be the state religion. In society, there is an increasing presence of radical Islamic tendencies despite a positive trend towards furthering democratic practices. The constitution states that all public policies must be based on Islamic beliefs. Some legal provisions for religious freedom exist, but these are directed more towards foreigners than native Christians. Proselytization of any religion except Islam is illegal, converts can be prosecuted and Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) face severe discrimination from the Muslim majority. They are put under pressure not to practice their faith, leaving them little option but to live out their faith in secret. Radical scholars locally known as Djaulas, many of whom are from Pakistan or trained in other Muslim nations, are pushing for stricter sharia laws in the country.

### Pray for Comoros

- + Though the score for violence is very low, there has been an increase since last year. Pray for the safety of Christians in this nation.

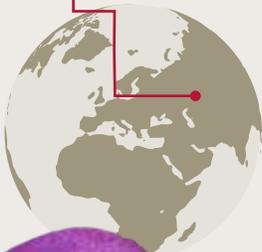
[VISIT ODUSA.ORG/COMOROS FOR MORE](http://VISIT ODUSA.ORG/COMOROS FOR MORE)



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# KAZAKHSTAN

56/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Nursultan Nazarbayev  
**Population:** 17 million (2.5 million Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Isla

**Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Dictatorial paranoia/Islamic extremism

## Many Different Persecution Engines in Kazakhstan

All four WWL categories of Christianity exist in Kazakhstan and experience some level of persecution. Communities of expatriate or migrant Christians and historical Christian communities experience the least problems from the government, as they do not usually evangelize actively. Communities of converts to Christianity – here from a Muslim background (MBBs) - bear the brunt of the persecution both at the hands of the state and from family, friends and community. Non-traditional Protestant Christian communities are active in evangelism and suffer from raids, threats, arrests and fines, especially when the churches have not been registered.

### Pray for Kazakhstan

- + Pressure from family and community remains very high in this country. Pray that Christians would stand strong in spite of this.

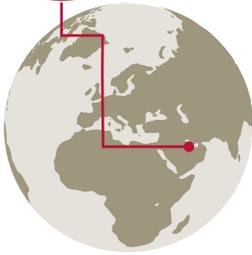
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# UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** President Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan **Government:** Federation  
**Population:** 9.3 million (400,000 Christians) **Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism  
**Main Religion:** Islam

## Wealthy and Yet Spiritually Poor

United Arab Emirates is a country of contrasts. On the one hand, it is known for its stability, wealth and development. On the other hand, freedom of religion, press, assembly, association and expression are severely restricted in this kingdom. The country is one of the most strategically important and relatively stable countries in a very volatile region. Having a population of less than ten million (of which expatriates make up around 80%), UAE is a hub for international financial and construction companies. All decisions about political leadership rest with the dynastic rulers of the seven emirates and there is no place for the will of the people at large. There is no space or recognition of political parties, according to Freedom House, which rated the country as “not free” in its 2016 report. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is also full of contradictions: It provides for religious freedom but states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. Apostasy is punishable by death.



### Pray for United Arab Emirates

- + Muslim Background Believers face the most persecution of any group in this country. Pray for their safety.

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

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# SRI LANKA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Maithripala Sirisena **Main Religion:** Buddhism  
**Population:** 20.3 million (1.4 million Christians) **Government:** Republic  
**Source of Persecution:** Religious nationalism

## Decade-long Conflict

The national elections in January 2015 were won by opposition candidate Sirisena, who defeated the president responsible for bringing the 26 year civil war to a bloody end in 2009. A major issue is the de-militarization of the country. Due to the decade-long conflict and the ever-increasing business activities of the army. Many in the army will not want to lose lucrative opportunities, especially if they might face an investigation into war crimes. Finally, radical Buddhist groups are still very much alive, but have currently stopped their actions against religious minorities. Nevertheless, mobs (often led by Buddhist monks) have continued to stop church services. A re-emphasis on Buddhism as the predominant religion is apparent in the new Constitution.



### Pray for Sri Lanka

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

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# INDONESIA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Joko Widodo

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 249.9 million (36 million Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

**Main Religion:** Islam

## Despite Moderate Islam, Believers Are Persecuted by Radicalists

Claims that Indonesia would be unaffected Islamic State (ISIS), due to its special brand of moderate and diverse Islam, were shattered when an attack against a café in Jakarta in January 2016 claimed seven lives. Radical Islamic groups continue to pose serious challenges, especially when connected to international movements. Most citizens are not interested in issues of religion or minorities (as was demonstrated by a poll published in May 2016), instead they are more concerned about quick economic improvements. The government is taking the fight against extremists seriously: In July 2016 it killed the leader of the East Indonesian Mujahedin (MIT), "Santoso", in Central Sulawesi.

### Pray for Indonesia

- + There have been several churches attacked in this country. Pray for the safety of believers as they attend church.

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

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# MAURITANIA

55/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz

**Main Religion:** Islam

**Population:** 3.9 million  
(Thousands of Christians)

**Government:** Islamic Republic

**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Military Rule in Mauritania

Mauritania is self-proclaimed Islamic Republic and has been under military rule for more than 30 years, with only a short democratic interruption in 2007. The country is formally a multiparty democracy, but its parliament is completely dominated by the ruling party. There are several Islamist groups that are active in the political scene in the country. Ethnicity is also an important factor in Mauritania's politics. Mauritania is one of the world's poorest countries. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has been a challenge to the Mauritanian government since 2005.

### Pray for Mauritania

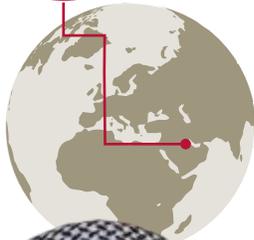
- + Since there are so few believers, Christians often feel isolated. Pray for their strength.

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

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# BAHRAIN

54/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa  
**Population:** 1.3 million (188,500 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Constitutional monarchy  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism/  
dictatorial paranoia

## Private Worship in Bahrain

The rulers of this Gulf State have managed to consolidate their powers through repressive means. This mainly Shia-Islamic country is relatively tolerant in general because of its international position in banking and trade. A considerable number of expatriate/migrant Christians (mainly from South Asia) work and live in Bahrain and are relatively free to practice their faith in private places of worship, but proselytizing Muslims is illegal. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is full of contradictions. On the one hand, it provides for religious freedom, and on the other hand, it states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. In the reporting period, the king donated land for the construction of a second Coptic church.



### Pray for Bahrain

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

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

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# OMAN

53/100 HIGH PERSECUTION



**Leader:** Sultan Qaboos bin Said  
**Population:** 3.6 million (234,000 Christians)  
**Main Religion:** Islam

**Government:** Absolute monarchy  
**Source of Persecution:** Islamic extremism

## Freedom of Worship and Yet Upheld Religious Customs

Oman is located at a very strategic position- the confluence of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. The current sultan came to power in 1970 and is credited for bringing security and stability and introducing democratic reforms. Even as many Arab states have succumbed to sectarian violence and political tumult, the Sultanate of Oman did not experience any major violence or serious uprisings. Oman is the country of Ibadi Islam, a sect which is supposed to be far less violent than mainstream Sunni or Shia. The constitutional provision regarding religious freedom is full of contradictions: On the one hand, it provides for religious freedom, but then states that the practice of freedom of religion should not violate established customs, public policy or public morals. There is fear that the fighting in Yemen might have a spill-over effect.



### Pray for Oman

+ Muslim Background Believers suffer the most in this country. Pray for their strength in spite of the persecution they face.

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

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# COLOMBIA

53/100 HIGH PERSECUTION

**Leader:** President Juan Manuel Santos

**Government:** Republic

**Population:** 48.3 million (44.6 million Christians)

**Source of Persecution:** Organized corruption/

**Main Religion:** Christianity (Roman Catholicism) Tribal antagonism

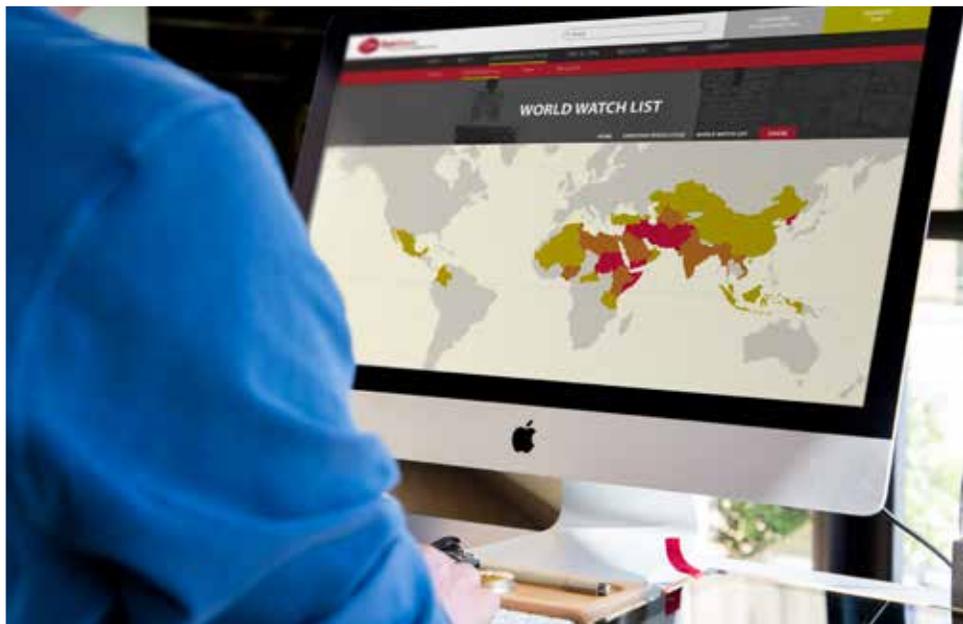
## Organized Crime Poses Threat to Believers

Formally, Colombia is a modern democratic country where the rule of law is established and religious freedom is guaranteed. However, large areas of the country are under the control of criminal organizations, drug cartels, revolutionaries and paramilitary groups. In a context of generalized impunity, all inhabitants of Colombia suffer from the conflict that has lasted for decades and has still not ended, but Christians are particularly vulnerable to such hostilities. Of the four WWL categories of Christianity, three exist in Colombia: Historical Christian communities, Communities of converts to Christianity from indigenous traditional religions and non-traditional Protestant Christian communities.

### Pray for Colombia

- + Pray for Christians who face violence from rebel groups. Pray for God's wisdom and protection when reaching out to these groups.

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For the complete list, more information and resources visit [ODUSA.org/WWL](http://ODUSA.org/WWL)