

Christian Persecution

Theme verse

1 Co 12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

Reference verses

Psalms 9:13 Have mercy on me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, you that lift me up from the gates of death:

Psalms 119:86 All your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help you me.

Jeremiah 20:11 But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

Mt 5:11-12 Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Jn 15:18-19 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Jn 15:25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Matthew 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

1 Corinthians 4:12 And labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

1 Thessalonians 3:4 For truly, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and you know.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

Hebrews 10:33 Partly, whilst you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst you became companions of them that were so used.

1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you:

1 Peter 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Saul of Tarsus persecuted Christians

Acts 8:3 As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

Acts 22:4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

Acts 22:19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

Acts 26:10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*.

Paul was persecuted

Acts 16:22-23 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat *them*. v23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast *them* into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely:

2 Co 11:24-25 Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one. v25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

Acts 14:19 And there came thither *certain* Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew *him* out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

The World Watch List Background & Trends

EACH YEAR, THE WORLD WATCH LIST RANKS THE TOP 50 COUNTRIES WHERE CHRISTIANS FACE THE MOST PERSECUTION. TYPES OF PERSECUTION, SEVERITY AND OTHER ELEMENTS ARE ALL MONITORED IN THE REPORTING PERIOD. THE WORLD WATCH LIST IS AUDITED BY AN OUTSIDE HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE CREDIBILITY AND AUTHENTICITY.



In 2015, persecution increased around the world, even in places where it has not been reported in the past, such as parts of Asia, Latin America, and especially sub-Saharan Africa. There have been some significant trends documenting this persecution.

Here are some significant trends to note while reading the 2015 World Watch List and this report:

- + The most rapidly growing area of persecution in the WWL is in the countries of Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- + Worldwide levels of persecution have risen, but this has not been primarily due to increased violence, but increased cultural marginalization.
- + Asia is facing more persecution again- several Asian countries have seen rising levels of persecution.
- + Latin America is back on the radar- Mexico is on the World Watch List this year, along with Colombia.
- + Islamic extremism is by far the most significant persecution engine- 40 of the 50 countries on the World Watch List are affected by this kind of persecution.
- + Under the influence of ISIS, radical sentiments have increased in the Middle East. Many historically Christian communities have been forced to flee.

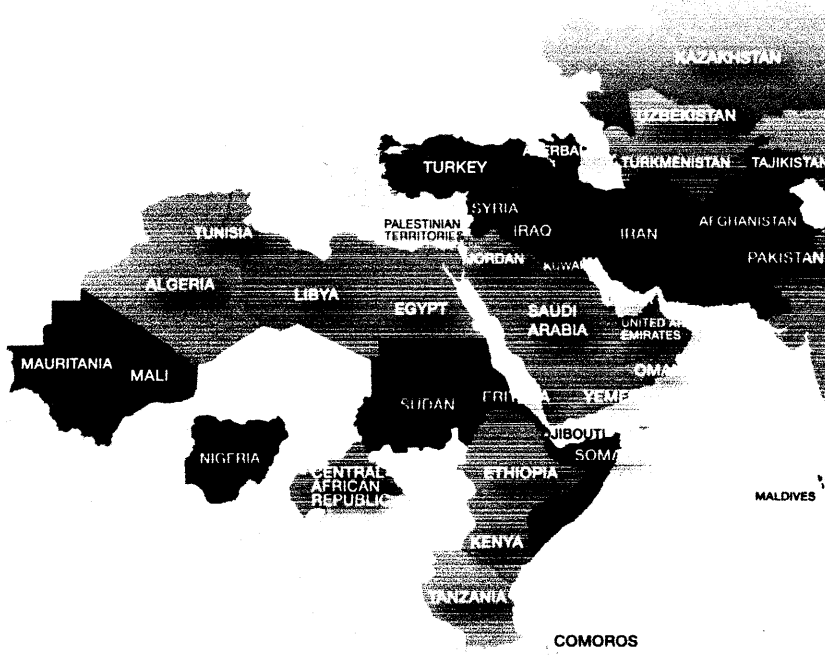
Sign-up to pray, give and share all 50 World Watch List countries at www.OpenDoorsUSA.org
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2015 *World Watchlist* Open Doors

The World Watch List (WWL) is a ranking of 50 countries where persecution of Christians for religious reasons is most severe.

Open Doors works in the world's most oppressive countries, strengthening Christians to stand strong in the face of persecution and equipping them to shine Christ's light in these places.



Decrease in rank ----- ▾
 Increase in rank ----- ▲
 Rank stayed the same ---- ■
 New country ----- †

COUNTRY	RANK	2014
North Korea	1	1
Somalia	2	2
Iraq	3	4
Syria	4	3
Afghanistan	5	5
Sudan	6	11
Iran	7	9
Pakistan	8	8
Eritrea	9	12
Nigeria	10	14
Maldives	11	7
Saudi Arabia	12	6
Libya	13	13
Yemen	14	10
Uzbekistan	15	15
Vietnam	16	18
Central African Republic	17	16
Qatar	18	19
Kenya	19	43
Turkmenistan	20	20
India	21	28
Ethiopia	22	17
Egypt	23	22
Djibouti	24	27
Myanmar	25	46
Palestinian Territories	26	34
Brunei	27	24
Laos	28	21
China	29	37
Jordan	30	26
Bhutan	31	31
Comoros	32	42
Tanzania	33	49
Algeria	34	32
Colombia	35	25
Tunisia	36	30
Malaysia	37	40
Mexico	38	new
Oman	39	27
Mali	40	33
Turkey	41	new
Kazakhstan	42	39
Bangladesh	43	48
Sri Lanka	44	29
Tajikistan	45	45
Azerbaijan	46	new
Indonesia	47	47
Mauritania	48	36
United Arab Emirates	49	35
Kuwait	50	38

A Deeper Look Into The Top 3 Countries On The World Watch List



NORTH KOREA #1



92/100
score

Leader: Kim Jong-Un

Population: 24.5 million (300,000 Christians)

Main Religion: Atheism/traditional beliefs

Government: Communist dictatorship

Source of persecution: Communist oppression/ Dictatorial paranoia



North Korea ranked first on the 2015 World Watch List for the 13th consecutive year. Yet again, nothing has improved for Christians since Kim Jong Un took over power. Pressure remains extremely high, and there is virtually no way to escape for those who don't live near the Chinese border.

In most countries, there is a mixture of different persecution engines, though regularly one can be identified as the main reason. In North Korea, there is one all-encompassing persecution engine, excluding all other possible engines: Communist oppression.

The God-like worship of the rulers leaves no room for any other religion. Any reverence not concentrated on the Kim dynasty will be seen as dangerous and state-threatening.

Not only will the believers themselves be punished if they are discovered, but likely also their families. Immediate family members, even if they aren't Christians themselves, will serve a sentence in a re-education camp. Christians are sent to political labor camps, from which there is no release possible.

According to recent reports about the labor camp systems, it is estimated that political prison camps house approximately 150,000 to 200,000 inmates, not including all those in the other types of prisons in the country. One report suggests the number of political prisoners dropped to between 80,000 and 120,000 people, due to the high death rate.

PRAY

- + For the 50,000-70,000 Christians imprisoned in labor camps. Ask God to sustain them.
- + That God would change the heart of Kim Jong-Un, and use him to reform the country.
- + For protection for ministry partners who are bringing practical and spiritual support to believers.

AN ESTIMATED 50,000 TO 70,000 CHRISTIANS



SUFFER DAILY IN NORTH KOREA'S PRISON CAMPS

Sign-up to pray, give and share all 50 World Watch List countries at www.OpenDoorsUSA.org

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SOMALIA #2



90/100
score

Leader: President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

Government: Federal republic

Population: 10.3 million (A few hundred Christians)

Source of persecution: Islamic extremism

Main Religion: Islam



PRAY

- + Praise God that, despite the pressures, He has preserved a Christian witness in Somalia.
- + For the very few isolated believers. Ask God to provide ways for them to mature in Christ.
- + That Christians would have more freedom to worship Jesus.

Somalia ranks as the second most difficult place to be a Christian in the world. The main types of Christians in Somalia are Christian converts from a Muslim Background, also known as Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), and there is a tiny population of expatriate aid workers.

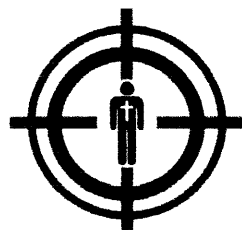
The majority of people within Somalia are Muslim, and no one is expected to be a Christian. Moreover, Islamic religious leaders publicly maintain that there is no room for Christianity, Christians and churches in Somalia. This view is upheld and reinforced on different levels by government officials of the various administrations (including the Somalia Federal Government, located in Mogadishu), political parties and ordinary people.

Additionally, the violent, militant Islamist terrorist group, al-Shabaab, subscribes to the Wahhabist doctrine and advocates for Sharia law as a basis to regulate all aspects of life in Somalia (i.e. legal, political, social and economic).

Al-Shabaab's implementation of its Wahhabist worldview is so extreme that, according to an Open Doors field researcher, even Sufi-Muslims move underground to avoid persecution by al-Shabaab. The social structure underpinning the way in which Somalia is governed is tribal. Clans within this tribal system maintain their own militias. This tribal system allows Islamic extremism, via groups like al-Shabaab, to flourish in Somalia.

In the country's very recent history, MBBs, or those accused of being MBBs, have often been killed on the spot when discovered. An Open Doors field researcher indicated that ordinary citizens, in collaboration with al-Shabaab, have been involved in the killing of Christians. The researcher stated that, "Believers have been betrayed into the hands of al-Shabaab by their neighbors..."

Open Doors field reports indicate that Somali Christians have to hide their faith to get access to basic necessities, such as basic social services, education or justice. Church life is constrained and has to remain underground. Believers are organized in small community groups, and they meet in secret across the country.



IN SOMALIA, CHRISTIAN LIVES ARE TARGETED BY ISLAMIC TERRORIST GROUPS, CLAN AUTHORITIES AND BY SOME GOVERNING OFFICIALS.

IRAQ #3

★★★ 86/100
score



PRAY

- + For Muslim Background Believers who often face opposition from their family and community.
- + For the protection of Christians fleeing from ISIS
- + For Open Doors workers supporting displaced Christians with trauma counseling, training and income generating projects.

Leader: Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki

Population: 35.9 million (A few thousand Christians)

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Parliamentary democracy

Source of persecution: Islamic extremism

Iraq has a long church history. Related to today's borders, the Christian biblical patriarch Abraham was an Iraqi. Mosul, Iraq's second biggest city now captured by ISIS militants, is the current name of the former city Nineveh, from the biblical book of Jonah. There has been a long tradition of Christians living in Iraqi cities, such as Baghdad and Mosul. Before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraq was home to one of the largest Christian communities of the Middle East. Christians have lived here for nearly two millennia, but are currently on the verge of extinction.

In June 2014, ISIS took hold of large parts of north and west Iraq, including the second largest city of the country, Mosul. It proclaimed a caliphate (which includes the region they control in Syria) and implemented specific rules. The punishments for breaking these rules are cruel, varying from cutting off hands to execution. Christians were forced to pay a tax for being a part of a religious minority, allegedly varying from \$250 to \$450. When an Assyrian family was not able to pay this amount, the mother and daughter were raped in front of the father. He was so traumatized by this event that he committed suicide later.

After July 17th, ISIS began marking houses owned by Christians with the Arabic 'N', which stands for 'Nazarene'- Arab for 'Christian'. These houses were taken over by ISIS militants. The militants gave Christians in Mosul an ultimatum to convert to Islam by July 19th, pay a tax or be executed.

On July 25th, 2014, ISIS declared Mosul to be free of Christians, and this event was celebrated on the streets of Mosul. Since then, several churches and monasteries have been raised to the ground, burned, or have been changed into ISIS offices, animal breeding houses or storages. Christian and Shiite gravesites have been blown up and destroyed. On July 27th, a Christian man was allegedly beheaded after he asked why he was being stopped in the street.

**MORE THAN 140,000
CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN
FORCED TO FLEE FROM
THEIR HOMES SINCE ISIS
INFILTRATED IRAQ LAST YEAR.**



Open Doors USA

Christian Persecution

1 Corinthians 12:26 says that we are one body. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

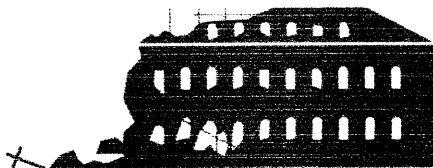
[What is Christian Persecution](#)
[Where Does Christian Persecution Occur](#)
[Why Persecution Occurs](#)
[Why We Serve Persecuted Christians](#)
[Theology Of Christian Persecution](#)

EACH MONTH

322 CHRISTIANS ARE KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH



214 CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN PROPERTIES ARE DESTROYED



772 FORMS OF VIOLENCE ARE COMMITTED AGAINST CHRISTIANS (SUCH AS BEATINGS, ABDUCTION, RAPES, ARRESTS AND FORCED MARRIAGES)



Learn more about the persecution of Christians worldwide, and what you can do to help.

What is Christian Persecution?

Christian persecution is any hostility experienced from the world as a result of one's identification as a Christian. From verbal harassment to hostile feelings, attitudes and actions, Christians in areas with severe religious restrictions pay a heavy price for their faith. Beatings, physical torture, confinement, isolation, rape, severe punishment, imprisonment, slavery, discrimination in education and employment, and even death are just a few examples of the persecution they experience on a daily basis. According to The Pew Research Center, over 75% of the world's population lives in areas with severe religious restrictions (and many of these people are Christians). Also, according to the United States Department of State, Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Jesus Christ.

Where Does Christian Persecution Occur?

The [World Watch List](#) ranks the top 50 countries where Christians face the greatest persecution. See what life is like for persecuted Christians in each of these countries.

Why Persecution Occurs:

AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNMENTS SEEK TO CONTROL ALL RELIGIOUS THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION

There are numerous reasons why Christians are persecuted. In some countries, severe abuse of Christians takes place under authoritarian governments. In the case of [North Korea](#) and other communist countries, authoritarian governments seek to control all religious thought and expression as part of a comprehensive plan to control all aspects of political and civic life. These governments regard some religious groups as enemies of the state because they hold religious beliefs that may challenge loyalty to the rulers.

HOSTILITY TOWARDS NONTRADITIONAL AND MINORITY RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Another reason why Christians are persecuted is hostility towards nontraditional and minority religious groups. For example, in [Niger](#), more than 98 percent of the population is Islamic, and hostility comes more from society than from the government. Historically, Islam in West Africa has been moderate, but in the last 20 years, dozens of Islamic associations have emerged, like the Izala movement, which aims to restrict the freedom of 'deviant Muslims' and minority religious groups like Christians.

THE LACK OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

The lack of basic human rights is another significant part of persecution in some countries. For instance, in [Eritrea](#), there are violations of the freedom of expression, assembly, and religious belief and movement, in addition to extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, extended detention, torture, and indefinite national service, which cause many Eritreans to flee the country.

Freedom of religion, like all freedoms of thought and expression, is inherent. Our beliefs help define who we are and serve as a foundation for what we contribute to our societies. However, today, many people live under governments that abuse or restrict freedom of religion. Christians in such areas suffer deeply, and are denied basic freedoms that humans should be entitled to.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This declaration came as a result of the treatment of the Jews in Nazi Germany. The document states that every person is entitled to basic human rights. This reaffirmed the dignity and worth of all human beings no matter what a person's race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. In 1966, the [United Nations developed the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) in addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 18 of the ICCPR focuses on four elements of religious freedom:

Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.

Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Why We Serve Persecuted Christians

The Bible calls us to be a voice for the voiceless. [Psalm 82:3](#) says, "Stand up for those who are weak and for those whose fathers have died. See to it that those who are poor and those who are beaten down are treated fairly."

As Christians, we are called to take a stand for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. [Hebrews 13:3](#) says, "Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." [Learn more](#) about how you can help persecuted Christians.

Theology Of Christian Persecution

[Matthew 5:10-12](#) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

For almost 60 years, Open Doors has worked in the world's most oppressive countries, empowering Christians who are persecuted for their beliefs. These believers stand strong, despite the many obstacles that they face. What are some of the things that we can learn from their faith?

There is something about hardship that allows us to know God deeply. When times get really tough, we discover more about who God is and how He works. Christians who have endured persecution for their faith, know this well.

There are no easy answers for why God allows his followers to face suffering. However, the lives of persecuted Christians reveal that even when things look out of control believers can rest secure, knowing that God is still in control. He is able to give courage, peace and even joy to stand strong through the storm. It is through these storms that believers discover God's love in new and powerful ways.

Standing Strong Through The Storm is the curriculum that Open Doors uses to help Christians stand strong in the face of persecution. There are six theological and biblical lessons from this curriculum:

Sometimes you need to build yourself a cell

Be still, and know that I am God—[Psalms 46:10](#)

One Chinese church leader, who spent 23 years in prison, once said this to Christians who did not face persecution:

"I was pushed into a cell, but you have to push yourself into one. You have no time to know God. You need to build yourself a cell, so you can do for yourself what persecution did for me—simplify your life and know God."