

Countries where Christians routinely face persecution:

* It has been estimated that more Christians were martyred in the 20th Century than in the previous 1,900 years combined. This is not just in a few areas. It is truly widespread and increasing. A rise of religious nationalism in some countries along with extremism in Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism has accelerated the threat to Christians.

* There were more than 26 million documented cases of martyrdom in the 20th century alone.

* More than 200 million Christians in over 60 nations face persecution each day, and it is estimated that over half of these are children.

* It is estimated that between 150,000 and 165,000 Christians are martyred each year.

Most all estimates are that anywhere from 8,000-100,000 Christians died each year because of their belief in and commitment to follow Jesus Christ.

"The truth is two thirds of the 2.3 billion Christians in the world today live... in dangerous neighborhoods. They are often poor. They often belong to ethnic, linguistic and cultural minorities. And they are often at risk. Todd Johnson, Center for Study on Global Christianity.

The following is a partial list of countries where Christians are currently being persecuted:

China

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

Widespread persecution of church leaders and members, especially those in unregistered (underground) churches, which may represent as many as 100 million believers.

Indonesia

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst)

Militant Muslims have waged periodic Jihad ('Holy War') against Christian communities in the Molucca Islands and Sulawesi. Over 600 churches have been destroyed since 1996.

Nigeria

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst)

The imposition of Islamic Sharia law in more than 10 states has caused thousands of Christians to flee, and has exacerbated differences between the predominantly Christian south and the Islamic north.

North Korea

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

Over 100,000 people, including many Christians, are believed to be imprisoned in North Korea's barbaric death camps. The brutal dictatorship of Kim Jong Il suppresses all religious activities, and imposes a personality cult based around the 'Great Leader'.

Pakistan

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

Pakistan's poorly-drafted 295c blasphemy laws, which carry the death penalty for 'blaspheming Mohammed', have been misused against Christians and other minorities. Militant Muslims are increasingly attacking churches and Christian organizations.

Sudan

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

Famine and the long-running civil war between the Muslim North and Christian/animist South have led to over

two million deaths in the last two decades. Thousands of Southern Sudanese have been literally enslaved after being seized in government raids.

Cuba

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

The church was initially persecuted by the Communist regime of Fidel Castro, when church leaders were sent to labor camps. Christians now enjoy greater freedom, although house churches are still subject to repression.

Colombia

Religious Freedom Rating: 4 (7 is worst)

Pastors have been targeted by guerrilla movements such as FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), with 400 churches being forced to close in areas under the control of armed groups. Christians have also been killed for speaking out against violence and the widespread drug trade.

Morocco

Religious Freedom Rating: 4 (7 is worst)

Anyone converting to Christianity can face charges of treachery and illegal contact with foreign missions. A small Moroccan church is emerging, estimated to number some 500 indigenous believers in 2000.

Mauritania

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

Islam is the state religion, and conversion from Islam is strictly forbidden. The Catholic Church is the only recognized religious group outside of Islam. Sharia law is intermittently applied.

Algeria

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

In recent years Christians have been attacked by the Islamic Salvation Front, and Islamic fundamentalists are pushing for the implementation of Sharia law.

Libya

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

Sunni Islam is the state religion, but secular influences are strong. There are very few Libyan Christian believers. There is a limit of one church per denomination per city.

Egypt

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst)

The constitution gives preference to Muslims, and Christians are often treated as second-class citizens, denied political representation and discriminated against in employment. The Egyptian Coptic Church is by far the largest body of Christians in the Middle East.

Somalia

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

The small Somali church has been driven underground, and exists mainly in the south. A number of believers have been martyred, others have been publicly named as targets for execution.

Turkey

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst) The Christian Population has declined from 22 per cent in 1900 to 0.32 per cent today. There is increasing openness by the government to recognize Turkey as a multi-cultural, multi-religious country. Periodic acts of violence against non-Muslim institutions.

Syria

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst) Christian minorities are tolerated and have freedom to worship and witness within their own community, but all activities that could threaten the government or communal harmony are carefully watched.

Kuwait Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst) Christians are free to live and work in Kuwait, but must worship in a recognized location. Evangelism to Kuwaitis is forbidden.

Saudi Arabia

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

Saudi Arabia is the guardian of Islam's two holiest sites, Mecca and Medina. Any citizen who converts from Islam to another religion faces the death penalty. Islamic Sharia law is the main source of legislation.

Qatar

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

Criticism of the ruling family monarchy or Islam is a crime. However expatriate believers are allowed to practice their faith.

Yemen

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

It is illegal for Muslims to convert to Christianity, and those Yemenis who do face many social pressures. Most Christians in the country are expatriates, many being Ethiopian refugees.

Oman

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

Churches and church activities for expatriates are allowed, but evangelism of Muslims is forbidden. There is a handful of indigenous believers.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

Islam is the state religion. Expatriate Christians, representing many different language groups, have freedom to worship and witness to their faith.

Iran

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

Shi'a Islam is the state religion. Conversion from Islam to another faith is a capital crime. There is a ban on the printing of all Christian literature, and constant surveillance of churches and those who attend them.

Iraq

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

After the fall of Saddam Hussein, members of underground churches are struggling to practice their faith. The Christian community is largely Assyrian, with some Armenians. About one-third of all Christians fled Iraq in the 1990s.

Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

Religious Freedom Rating: 4-7 (7 is worst)

The CIS comprises Russia and 11 other republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union, including Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Christians face harassment and repression from both old-guard Communists, and Islamic militants.

Afghanistan

Religious Freedom Rating: na (7 is worst)

Public persecution of Christians has once again emerged, and Christians still face constant harassment from militant Muslims.

Nepal

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst)

Militant Hindus are targeting Christians with hostile propaganda and violence; while Maoist guerrillas, who control one-fifth of the country, have also attacked Christians.

India

Religious Freedom Rating: 5 (7 is worst)

States such as Orissa and Gujarat have been racked by violence as radical Hindus have attacked Christian communities. Six Indian states have passed anti-conversion laws that impose prison terms and fines against anyone using force, fraud or allurement to convert another.

Bangladesh

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

Islam is the state religion, and radical Muslims are pushing for the introduction of full Islamic Sharia law. Hindus, Christians and Buddhists have all experienced religious discrimination and attacks by militant Muslims.

Sri Lanka

Religious Freedom Rating: 4 (7 is worst)

Buddhism is given the 'foremost place' in the Constitution. Militant Buddhists have increasingly instigated mob violence against evangelical Christians in rural areas. 65 churches were attacked in 2003.

Bhutan

Religious Freedom Rating: 6 (7 is worst)

All public worship and evangelism by non-Buddhists is illegal. The king wields absolute power, and there are no legal guarantees on freedom of religion.

Burma (Myanmar)

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

The State Peace and Development Council attempts to control every religious activity. All gatherings of five or more people are illegal. Ethnic minorities, such as the Karen, have been targets of repression.

Malaysia

Religious Freedom Rating: 4 (7 is worst)

Although the constitution guarantees religious freedom, fundamentalist Muslims do everything in their power politically to inhibit Christian evangelism. Ethnic Malays are not allowed to have a Christian place of worship.

Laos

Religious Freedom Rating: n/a (7 is worst)

Communist leaders in some districts have implemented a program called 'New Mechanism' in which anyone who does not convert to Buddhism or animism is forcibly removed from their district. Christian villagers have been forced to sign documents renouncing their faith.

Eritrea

Religious Freedom Rating: n/a (7 is worst)

Evangelical Christians have come under increasing pressure. Only four religious groups are allowed to hold public meetings: Muslims, Catholics, Orthodox and Lutheran. Evangelical Christians have been imprisoned.

Maldives

Religious Freedom Rating: n/a (7 is worst)

This popular holiday destination in the Indian Ocean hides a repressive regime. Free speech is not respected for the press or non-Muslim religions. In 1998 all known Maldivian Christians were arrested.

Tibet

Religious Freedom Rating: 7 (7 is worst)

Christians find themselves caught between pressure from both Buddhism and Chinese communism. In 1999 the Chinese Communist Party in Lhasa decreed that atheism is necessary to promote economic development in the region, and to assist the struggle against the Dalai Lama (who fled in 1959).

Most Western Christians truly have NO IDEA what life has been like for some Christians in other areas of the world.