

OpenDoors®

THE WORLD WATCH LIST 2023

Your guide to the 50 most dangerous countries to be a Christian.



WAKE UP! AND STRENGTHEN WHAT REMAINS AND IS ABOUT TO DIE.

REVELATION 3:2A

We believe that no Christian should suffer persecution alone.
That's why we work in over 70 countries where it's most dangerous
to follow Jesus, strengthening and preparing the local church by
providing Bibles, training, and socioeconomic development.

Find out more: opendoors.org.au/impact | opendoors.org.nz/impact

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EXTREME PERSECUTION



VERY HIGH PERSECUTION



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THE WORLD WATCH LIST 2023



This year marks the 30th anniversary of the World Watch List. While the research methodology has evolved over time, our purpose remains the same – we want to help you understand where your Christian brothers and sisters are suffering for their faith and help you to stand with the parts of the body of Christ that are hurting the most.

Across the world, more than 360 million Christians suffer high to extreme levels of persecution for their faith in Jesus. That's 1 in 7 Christians worldwide.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?

Christian persecution is any hostility experienced because of one's identification with Christ. This definition covers not just violence but also the full range of pressure experienced by Christians because of their faith in Jesus including hostile attitudes, words, and actions.

It can look different in every country, from rejection and isolation, to being denied access to basic needs like water, food, and health care. Some face violent abuse, imprisonment, and even death.

WHAT IS THE WORLD WATCH LIST?

The World Watch List ranks the top 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The list is compiled by a group of experts, audited by an external organisation specialising in religious freedom, and checked for transparency. The World Watch List is the best and most authoritative list of its kind.

Through on the ground interviews and data analysis, the list provides an accurate picture of the difficulties persecuted Christians face worldwide. For each country, the list looks at the pressure and violence persecuted Christians endure in their public and private lives.

WHAT MAKES THE LIST RELIABLE?

The World Watch List is accepted as an authoritative study and is audited externally each year by the International Institute for Religious Freedom. The research for the World Watch List is undertaken by World Watch Research, the research department of Open Doors International.

The research team consists of one managing director, seven persecution analysts and one editor, all with university degrees. Three of the team have or are completing PhDs. Five are lawyers with experience in the field of human rights, constitutional law, or governance. The persecution analysts collaborate closely with researchers and other experts operating at regional, national, and subnational level.

WHY DOES THE WORLD WATCH LIST MATTER?

In 1 Corinthians 12, we are reminded that when one part of the body of Christ suffers, all parts suffer with it (1 Cor 12:26). The World Watch List helps us to understand where the body of Christ is hurting most. It is the cornerstone of all our work, informing what countries we need to work in to strengthen the Church as they suffer persecution for following Jesus.

WHAT DO THE SCORES MEAN?

Each country's score is determined by measuring the intensity of persecution across two categories; violence and pressure. Pressure is measured in five spheres of life: church, national, community, family, and private. Examples of each have been provided below but are not the only ways Christians experience these types of pressure.

Total persecution score = violence + pressure

Each of these six types of persecution receive equal weighting, and are added together to give a total score out of 100 (rounded to the nearest whole number after ranking).

Violence

Violence is defined as the deprivation of physical freedom or as serious bodily or mental harm to Christians or serious damage to their property and can occur in all spheres of life.

Church Life

The collective exercise by Christians of worship, life, service, and public expression of faith without undue interference. Persecution could involve requiring church registration, monitoring preaching material, harassment of leaders and their families, or restricting the printing or distribution of religious materials.

National Life

The interaction between Christians and the nation they live in, including rights and laws, the justice system, and public life. Persecution in this sphere could look like blasphemy accusations, unequal treatment in court, toleration of public disrespect, travel restrictions, or discrimination by authorities.

Community Life

Involves the workplace, business, health care, education, and local public life and civic order. Persecution in this sphere could include dress codes, monitoring, abduction, restricted access to community resources and/or health care, and employment or education discrimination or disadvantages.

Family Life

How much freedom has been restricted to live out Christian convictions within the family circle. Persecution in this sphere could involve forced allocations of religious identity, weddings, baptisms, burials, adoptions, child rearing, separation of families, pressure to divorce, or inheritance rights.

Private Life

How much freedom is restricted when relating to God one-on-one in their own private space. Persecution in this sphere could restrict private worship, possession of religious material, or freedom of expression.

#1 NORTH KOREA



IN THIS BRUTALLY HOSTILE NATION, CHRISTIANS HAVE NO FREEDOM TO WORSHIP.



CHRISTIANS: 400,000 (1.5%)

LEADER: Kim Jong Un

TOTAL SCORE: 98/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 100%

Violence: 87%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN NORTH KOREA:

opendoors.org.au/northkorea
opendoors.org.nz/northkorea

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

North Korea is a brutally hostile place for Christians. If discovered by the authorities, believers are either **sent to labour camps** as political prisoners where the conditions are atrocious, or killed on the spot – and their families will share their fate as well.

Christians have absolutely no freedom. It is almost impossible for believers to gather or meet to worship. Those who dare to meet must do so in **utmost secrecy** – and at enormous risk.

A report issued in 2022 said that Christians are particularly targeted and exposed to **torture** in North Korean prisons. Detention periods and **interrogations** are longer and more intense.

The reason for such extreme persecution is that Christianity is seen as a particular threat to the dictatorial ideology and governance of the country's barbaric regime. Christians are viewed as enemies of both the leadership and society in general.

PRAY WITH US

That the Holy Spirit will pour peace and strength into believers held in labour camps.

That those who gather in secret will be protected from the eyes of the authorities.

That the North Korean regime will allow the country to be helped by the wider world.

#2 SOMALIA



CHRISTIANS RISK VIOLENT ATTACKS BY EXTREMIST GROUPS AND FAMILY MEMBERS.



CHRISTIANS: Hundreds

LEADER: PM Hamza Abdi Barre

TOTAL SCORE: 92/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 99%

Violence: 52%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN SOMALIA:

opendoors.org.au/somalia
opendoors.org.nz/somalia

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Somalia is a majority Muslim nation, and society expects all Somalis to be Muslim.

The violent insurgent group al Shabaab has repeatedly expressed its desire to eradicate Christians from the country. Christians from Muslim backgrounds are regarded as high-value targets and may be killed on the spot if discovered.

Christians also face serious persecution from their family and community. Leaving Islam is regarded as a betrayal of the family

and clan, and family members and clan leaders will **harass, intimidate, and even kill** Somali converts.

Anyone suspected of being a Christian convert is closely monitored. 'Church life' is simply not possible, so the few believers must **meet in secret**. Islamic extremists have intensified their hunt for Christian leaders.

PRAY WITH US

Violent Islamic extremism is increasing. Pray for peace and for God's protection.

That isolated believers will know God's comfort and find ways to grow in their faith.

For God's wisdom and protection over Open Doors' work in the region.

#3 YEMEN



ISLAMIC LAWS, EXTREMIST GROUPS, AND THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS LEAVE CHRISTIANS AT RISK.



CHRISTIANS: A few thousand

LEADER: Dr. Rashad Muhammad al-Alimi

TOTAL SCORE: 89/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 100%

Violence: 36%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN YEMEN:

opendoors.org.au/yemen
opendoors.org.nz/yemen

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

It is extremely dangerous to be a Christian in Yemen, due to the strict Islamic laws and the presence of Islamic extremist groups.

The population is overwhelmingly Muslim, and it is illegal to convert from Islam to Christianity. Christian converts are at great **risk of being killed** by their families, clans, and tribes.

Most believers from a Muslim background choose to practise their faith covertly. They cannot gather because of fear that

neighbours will report them to the local authorities. Displaying Christian symbols could lead to **imprisonment, physical abuse, or even execution.**

All Yemenis are affected by the humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing civil war, but Christians are additionally vulnerable since emergency relief is mostly distributed through local Muslims and mosques, which allegedly **discriminate** against all who are not considered to be devout Muslims.

PRAY WITH US

For secret believers who still choose to follow Christ, despite the imminent dangers.

For humanitarian aid to reach all people in need, including those on the margins.

That God would change the atmosphere so that all can live with openness and freedom.

#4 ERITREA



AUTHORITIES TRY TO WIPE OUT UNACCEPTABLE FORMS OF CHRISTIANITY AND IMPRISON BELIEVERS.



CHRISTIANS: 1,709,000 (46.7%)

LEADER: President Isaias Afwerki

TOTAL SCORE: 89/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 92%

Violence: 73%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN ERITREA:

opendoors.org.au/eritrea
opendoors.org.nz/eritrea

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

For 20 years, Eritrea has only recognised three official Christian denominations: Orthodox, Catholic, and Lutheran, and closely monitors these churches.

The authorities perpetuate a stigma against believers and encourage neighbours to **spy on and report** each other. Those who have become Christians from Muslim backgrounds, or who leave the Eritrean Orthodox Church for a non-traditional church, face **extreme pressure and persecution** from their own families

and communities.

There are thought to be 1,000 Christians indefinitely **detained in Eritrean prisons**, not officially charged with anything.

Christian men, women, and children as young as 14 are being **conscripted into the armed forces** to fight in the conflict in Tigray. There is no time limit on service. Christian prisoners are often 'released' into military service instead of being allowed home.

PRAY WITH US

That those in power have a change of heart towards Christians.

For strength, hope, and joy for imprisoned believers and their families.

For Open Doors' work to strengthen new believers coming to faith.

#5 LIBYA



**SHARING THE GOSPEL
COULD HAVE YOU ARRESTED,
KIDNAPPED, OR EVEN KILLED.**



CHRISTIANS: 35,400 (<1%)

LEADER: Interim PM Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah

TOTAL SCORE: 83/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 95%

Violence: 54%

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING
A CHRISTIAN IN LIBYA:**

opendoors.org.au/libya

opendoors.org.nz/libya

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Libya is effectively a lawless land where both native Christians and those passing through from other countries face extreme violence.

With no central government to maintain law and order, Islamic extremist groups and organised crime groups both wield power. They **target and kidnap Christians**, and some believers have been killed.

If a Libyan from a Muslim background becomes a Christian, they are likely to face intense **pressure and abuse** from their

family and the wider community to make them renounce their faith. Those who publicly express their faith and try to share the gospel face **arrest or retribution from extremists**.

Large numbers of refugees from sub-Saharan Africa pass through Libya in an attempt to reach Europe, many of whom are Christians. They are likely to encounter harassment and threats, or to be abducted and used as **slave labour** by organised crime groups.

PRAY WITH US

For nationwide stability, law, and order to come quickly to Libya.

That God would bring persecutors to know Him and His saving love.

For Christians to be able to communicate safely with one another and be encouraged.

#6 NIGERIA



EXTREME VIOLENCE IS AN EVER-PRESENT DANGER FOR CHRISTIANS IN NIGERIA.



CHRISTIANS: 100,420,000 (46.3%)

LEADER: President Muhammadu Buhari

TOTAL SCORE: 88/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 86%

Violence: 100%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN NIGERIA:

opendoors.org.au/nigeria
opendoors.org.nz/nigeria

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Violence remains the most prevalent threat in Nigeria. Christians are attacked indiscriminately and brutally in northern Nigeria, and the **violence** has now spread to the south.

Groups such as Boko Haram and Fulani extremists inflict **murder**, physical **injury**, **abduction**, and **sexual violence** on their victims. Christians are dispossessed of their land and their means of livelihood. Many live as internally displaced people or refugees.

Abductions for ransom have increased considerably over recent years, including the abduction of church leaders. Christian women and girls may be subjected to sexual harassment and **forced marriage**.

In the Sharia states of northern Nigeria, Christians face **discrimination** and **exclusion** as second-class citizens. Christians from a Muslim background also face rejection from their own families, pressure to give up Christianity, and often physical violence.

PRAY WITH US

For an end to the violence inflicted by extremist groups across Nigeria.

That our partners can reach more survivors of violence and abduction with trauma care.

Thank God for the courageous faith of those who refuse to deny Christ despite the risks.

#7 PAKISTAN



BLASPHEMY LAWS CAN SEND YOU TO PRISON FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL.



CHRISTIANS: 4,194,000 (1.8%)

LEADER: PM Shehbaz Sharif

TOTAL SCORE: 86/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 84%

Violence: 100%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN PAKISTAN:

opendoors.org.au/pakistan

opendoors.org.nz/pakistan

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians in Pakistan are considered **second-class citizens** and face **discrimination** in every aspect of life. Jobs that are seen as low, dirty, and degrading are reserved for Christians by the authorities, who continue to push them to the margins of society.

Pakistan's notorious **blasphemy laws** target all religious minorities, but affect the Christian minority in particular – roughly a quarter of all blasphemy accusations target Christians, who only make up 1.8% of

the population. The number of blasphemy cases is increasing, as is the number of Christian girls being **abducted, abused, and forcibly converted** to Islam.

In addition to social hostility, Christians also experience apathy from the authorities who should protect them. The Christian community feels increasingly trapped between Islamic extremist groups that operate in the region, and a government that appeases these groups.

PRAY WITH US

That blasphemy laws will change so that Christians will be safe from false accusations.

For protection for girls who are forced into marriage.

For wisdom and protection for those helping those displaced by last year's floods.

#8 IRAN



CHURCHES ARE SEEN AS A THREAT TO THE REGIME THAT MUST BE WIPED OUT.



CHRISTIANS: 1,245,000 (1.4%)

LEADER: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

TOTAL SCORE: 86/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 90%

Violence: 64%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN IRAN:

opendoors.org.au/iran
opendoors.org.nz/iran

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Iran is ruled by an increasingly strict Islamic regime, which views the existence of Iranian **house churches** as an attempt by Western countries to undermine Islam and their authority.

State **surveillance** is on the rise and the authorities are exerting an increasing grip on daily life and activities, an attitude reflected in the harsh responses to the protests that followed the death of Mahsa Amini on 16 September 2022.

When people from Muslim backgrounds become Christians, they can only meet in secret house churches. They are at great risk of being **monitored, harassed, arrested, and prosecuted** for 'crimes against national security' – an accusation that is notoriously poorly defined and can be abused.

Iranian Christians may be banned from education, **lose their jobs**, and find it very difficult to get back into employment. Many believers feel **forced to leave** the country.

PRAY WITH US

That Jesus will set many more hearts free in Iran.

That Christianity will no longer be portrayed as a foreign idea.

For strong faith and courage for the Iranian Christians meeting in secret.

#9 AFGHANISTAN



FOLLOWING JESUS IS A DEATH SENTENCE IF YOUR FAITH IS DISCOVERED.



CHRISTIANS: Thousands

LEADER: Hibatullah Akhundzada (interim Taliban government)

TOTAL SCORE: 84/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 95%

Violence: 28%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN AFGHANISTAN:

opendoors.org.au/afghanistan
opendoors.org.nz/afghanistan

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The Taliban's takeover of power has forced most Christians either further **underground** or away from the country entirely. Many (if not all) house groups closed, with believers forced to leave behind everything they own. **Following Jesus remains a death sentence**, if discovered.

The rigid form of society imposed leaves no room for deviation, meaning Christians – almost all of whom are converts from Islam – must keep their faith secret. Leaving Islam is considered **shameful** and punishable

by death under the prevailing Islamic law.

Consequently, Christian converts face **dire and violent consequences** if their new faith is discovered, even from family members who must save their so-called 'honour' by getting rid of them.

Thousands of Afghan **refugees**, including many Christians, are now living in countries bordering Afghanistan, often in poor conditions in camps for displaced people.

PRAY WITH US

For the protection of secret believers and that God will bring hope to their hearts.

That those who have fled will be led to places where all their needs are met.

That the Holy Spirit will soften hearts towards women and religious minorities.



HOLDING ON TO JESUS

For Christians in Afghanistan, life is perilous. But believers hold on to Jesus – and your support and prayers bring hope.

“The Christian is a ‘kafir’ – sinner or infidel. If a man is found to be a Christian, they would kill him immediately. And not only him, but his whole family...”

Nilofer, a refugee, is explaining the horrific cost of following Jesus in her homeland, Afghanistan. She’s one of many believers who fled when the Taliban swept into Kabul and seized power in August 2021. “If I was in Afghanistan now, I would not be alive today, for sure,” said Nilofer.

Last year, Afghanistan topped Open Doors World Watch List as the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. Today, the Afghan church is depleted and hidden, suffering intense persecution. Taliban soldiers roamed villages, going door-to-door in search of believers and unleashing violent attacks.

Girls no longer attend school, and women who refuse to wear the hijab are beaten, even killed. But you chose to stand with our Afghan brothers and sisters when it mattered most. Your prayers give strength and courage to the Christians who remain. Open Doors partner Hana said, “Afghan believers carry the responsibility to be the light of Christ in a very dark world, and many die for their faith.”

She added, “Christians in this country stay to be the light of Christ and so God will bless their homeland. Even if their fellow citizens are hostile toward them.

“Though there are only a handful of believers, God has been faithful to them. He answers their prayers, gives them strength to endure suffering, and He leads the global Church, like you, to pray.”

Your gifts also provide vital practical help to Christian refugees. Open Doors partner Miranda visited families sheltering in an apartment together, in a secret location. “All of them sold everything they owned to come here,” said Miranda. “But life is difficult. They are professional doctors and nurses, but they cannot work, and must pay to renew their refugee status every year.”

One believer said, “You came to help us, you have not let us disappear into the darkness.” Your gifts supply food and essentials to families in need – and, above all, your support means Afghan Christians know they are not alone.

* Names changed to protect identities



Australia



New Zealand

Scan a code to read more about why Afghanistan moved down in its ranking from last year.

#10 SUDAN



**PERSECUTION AND VIOLENCE
COME FROM ALL ANGLES -
EVEN THOSE YOU LOVE MOST.**



CHRISTIANS: 2,000,000 (4.3%)

LEADER: Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan

TOTAL SCORE: 83/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 88%

Violence: 57%

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING
A CHRISTIAN IN SUDAN:**

opendoors.org.au/sudan

opendoors.org.nz/sudan

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Persecution of Christians remains at a high level, and there are fears this will worsen amid the ongoing unrest. After Omar al-Bashir was ousted in April 2019, Sudan's transitional government introduced exciting changes to the legal framework guaranteeing basic human rights for all, no matter their ethnicity, gender, or religion.

However, mass protests led to the resignation of the then Prime Minister in January 2022, and there are fears that

Sudan will return to the authoritarian years of the former president.

Social attitudes towards Christians have not changed. Christians are still vulnerable to extreme persecution from both their communities and their own families, particularly if they have converted from Islam. Converts may face **sexual assault** and **domestic violence** in their homes, as well as being vulnerable to **imprisonment**.

PRAY WITH US

That God will establish rulers who enforce lasting respect for human rights.

That believers from Muslim backgrounds will grow in their knowledge of Christ.

That all Christians will have wisdom to speak courageously about Jesus.

#11 INDIA



CHRISTIANS ARE NOT SEEN TO BE TRUE INDIANS AND FACE DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT.



CHRISTIANS: 69,494,000 (4.9%)

LEADER: PM Narendra Modi

TOTAL SCORE: 82/100 – Extreme

Pressure: 80%

Violence: 94%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN INDIA:

opendoors.org.au/india

opendoors.org.nz/india

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

In recent years, India has seen an increase in Hindutva, an ideology that believes only Hindus are true Indians, and that Christians and other religious minorities must be expelled. Many states are implementing **anti-conversion laws**, which are used as an excuse to **harass and intimidate** Christians.

Christians experience social **exclusion** in their communities, **discrimination** in the workplace, and have false accusations spread about them.

Those most at risk have come to faith from a Hindu background. Many face constant pressure to return to Hinduism, social exclusion, discrimination at work, physical assaults, and are sometimes even killed.

Church leaders are particularly vulnerable; being a pastor is one of the riskiest vocations in the country today. Hindu extremists target them, their wives, and children with **violent attacks** to sow **fear** in the wider Christian community.

PRAY WITH US

For a change of narrative around Indian identity that accepts minority faiths.

For protection over church leaders and their families.

That converts' faith would have a powerful effect on their families and neighbours.

#12 SYRIA

CHRISTIANS: 603,000 (3.1%)

LEADER: President Bashar al-Assad

TOTAL SCORE: 80/100 – Very High

Pressure: 83%

Violence: 68%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN SYRIA:

opendoors.org.au/syria
opendoors.org.nz/syria

PRAY WITH US

Praise God for the brave Christians who share Christ's love.

For God to bring peace and stability to the nation.

That local partners will serve with energy and passion.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Years of conflict and instability have created an environment in which persecution can flourish. Most church buildings have either been **demolished** or **repurposed** as Islamic centres. Public expressions of Christian faith are prohibited.

Conversion and evangelism are seen as a threat to social stability. Christians from a Muslim background experience particular **pressure from their families** and communities because their conversion is seen as a slight to the family's honour.

#13 SAUDI ARABIA

CHRISTIANS: 2,165,000 (6%)

LEADER: King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud

TOTAL SCORE: 80/100 – Very High

Pressure: 93%

Violence: 14%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN SAUDI ARABIA:

opendoors.org.au/saudiarabia
opendoors.org.nz/saudiarabia

PRAY WITH US

That isolated believers will find ways to connect with other Christians.

For strength, wisdom, and peace over new Christian converts.

That God will continue to build His church in Saudi Arabia.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Saudi Arabia is a highly conservative Islamic nation, and other religions **cannot be practised openly**. No official churches of any Christian denomination are allowed.

Most Christians are migrant workers from Asia and Africa, but there are also a small number of Saudi Christian converts. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is unacceptable under Islamic law, so many live as secret believers. Those whose faith is discovered face **severe pressure**, especially from their families.



#14 MYANMAR

CHRISTIANS: 4,421,000 (8%)

LEADER: General Min Aung Hlaing

TOTAL SCORE: 80/100 – Very High

Pressure: 78%

Violence: 92%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MYANMAR:

opendoors.org.au/myanmar

opendoors.org.nz/myanmar

PRAY WITH US

For reconciliation between religious groups in Myanmar.

For the protection of those who have been displaced due to conflict.

For resilience and steadfast faith for Christians who are suffering.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Since the military took control in February 2021, fighting has increased. The Christian minority bears the brunt of these attacks. More Christians than ever have become **internally displaced** and live in camps or churches without adequate food and healthcare. Churches, pastors, and Christian aid workers are **attacked**.

Converts to Christianity are **shunned from community life**. Communities make life for Christian families impossible by barring their access to community water resources.



#15 MALDIVES

CHRISTIANS: Hundreds

LEADER: President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

TOTAL SCORE: 77/100 – Very High

Pressure: 92%

Violence: 1%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MALDIVES:

opendoors.org.au/maldives

opendoors.org.nz/maldives

PRAY WITH US

For religious freedom to come to the Maldives.

For ways for believers to safely communicate and access Bibles.

That Christians feeling isolated will know God's presence and love.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The government boasts that the country is 100% Muslim, so any deviation is taken seriously. If a Christian is discovered, they are likely to be **reported** to authorities, can be **stripped of their citizenship**, or even given the **death penalty**.

The Maldives is made up of close-knit communities, making it difficult to talk to or meet up with anyone secretly. Christian faith must be kept so private that two members of the same family could be believers without the other ever knowing.

#16 CHINA



SOPHISTICATED SURVEILLANCE TRACKS CHRISTIANS, AND CHURCHES ARE SHUT DOWN.



CHRISTIANS: 96,700,000 (6.7%)

LEADER: General Secretary Xi Jinping

TOTAL SCORE: 77/100 – Very High

Pressure: 79%

Violence: 67%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN CHINA:

opendoors.org.au/china
opendoors.org.nz/china

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Tightening **restrictions** and increasing **surveillance** are putting Christians in China under intensifying pressure, as the Communist Party seeks to limit all threats to its power. Surveillance in China is among the most oppressive and sophisticated in the world, and Christian leaders are particularly vulnerable to persecution, including **imprisonment** or, in a small number of cases, **abduction**.

It remains illegal for under-18s to attend church. Many churches are being

monitored and closed, no matter whether they are independent or belong to the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (state-monitored churches).

Those who convert from other religions also face persecution. If a convert from Islam or Tibetan Buddhism is discovered by their family or community, they are usually **threatened and physically harmed** – all in an effort to win them back to their original faith.

PRAY WITH US

For strength, wisdom, and boldness for those facing surveillance and regulations.

That young people will be equipped to stand strong in their faith.

That the church in China will continue to see remarkable growth.



#17 MALI

CHRISTIANS: 490,000 (2.3%)

LEADER: Interim President
Assimi Goita

TOTAL SCORE: 76/100 – Very High

Pressure: 74%

Violence: 90%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MALI:

opendoors.org.au/mali

opendoors.org.nz/mali

PRAY WITH US

That stability, law, and order will return to Mali.

For our partners' work to help vulnerable Christians earn a living.

That new believers will find fellowship and retain their hope and joy.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Political instability has strengthened Islamic extremist groups, who abduct Christians, **enslaving them** or even **killing them**. Others are pressured to join the groups, where they will be **forcibly converted** to Islam and **made to fight**.

If somebody from a Muslim background becomes a Christian, they face pressure from their family to give up their new faith. This can include being **divorced**, **losing all the support** of their family, **social isolation**, and even **losing access to their children**.



#18 IRAQ

CHRISTIANS: 164,000 (<1%)

LEADER: PM Mohammed Shia
al-Sudani

TOTAL SCORE: 76/100 – Very High

Pressure: 86%

Violence: 28%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN IRAQ:

opendoors.org.au/iraq

opendoors.org.nz/iraq

PRAY WITH US

For peace and stability to come to Iraq so Christians can return home.

For understanding and cooperation between Christian denominations.

For God's protection and courage for believers from Muslim backgrounds.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Iraq is home to many traditional churches. All are affected by **intolerance**, **discrimination**, and **persecution** from local leaders, government authorities, and Islamic extremist groups.

Believers from Muslim backgrounds experience intense **pressure** from their families and communities. They may be **expelled from the family**, lose the means to get married, or be **forcibly divorced** and **lose their children**. They may be arrested and prosecuted if they are accused of trying to convert Muslims.

THE TOP 50

RANK COUNTRY

- 1 North Korea
- 2 Somalia
- 3 Yemen
- 4 Eritrea
- 5 Libya
- 6 Nigeria
- 7 Pakistan
- 8 Iran
- 9 Afghanistan
- 10 Sudan
- 11 India
- 12 Syria
- 13 Saudi Arabia
- 14 Myanmar
- 15 Maldives
- 16 China
- 17 Mali
- 18 Iraq
- 19 Algeria
- 20 Mauritania
- 21 Uzbekistan
- 22 Colombia
- 23 Burkina Faso
- 24 Central African Republic
- 25 Vietnam
- 26 Turkmenistan
- 27 Cuba
- 28 Niger
- 29 Morocco
- 30 Bangladesh
- 31 Laos
- 32 Mozambique
- 33 Indonesia
- 34 Qatar
- 35 Egypt
- 36 Tunisia
- 37 Democratic Republic of The Congo
- 38 Mexico
- 39 Ethiopia
- 40 Bhutan
- 41 Turkey
- 42 Comoros
- 43 Malaysia
- 44 Tajikistan
- 45 Cameroon
- 46 Brunei
- 47 Oman
- 48 Kazakhstan
- 49 Jordan
- 50 Nicaragua

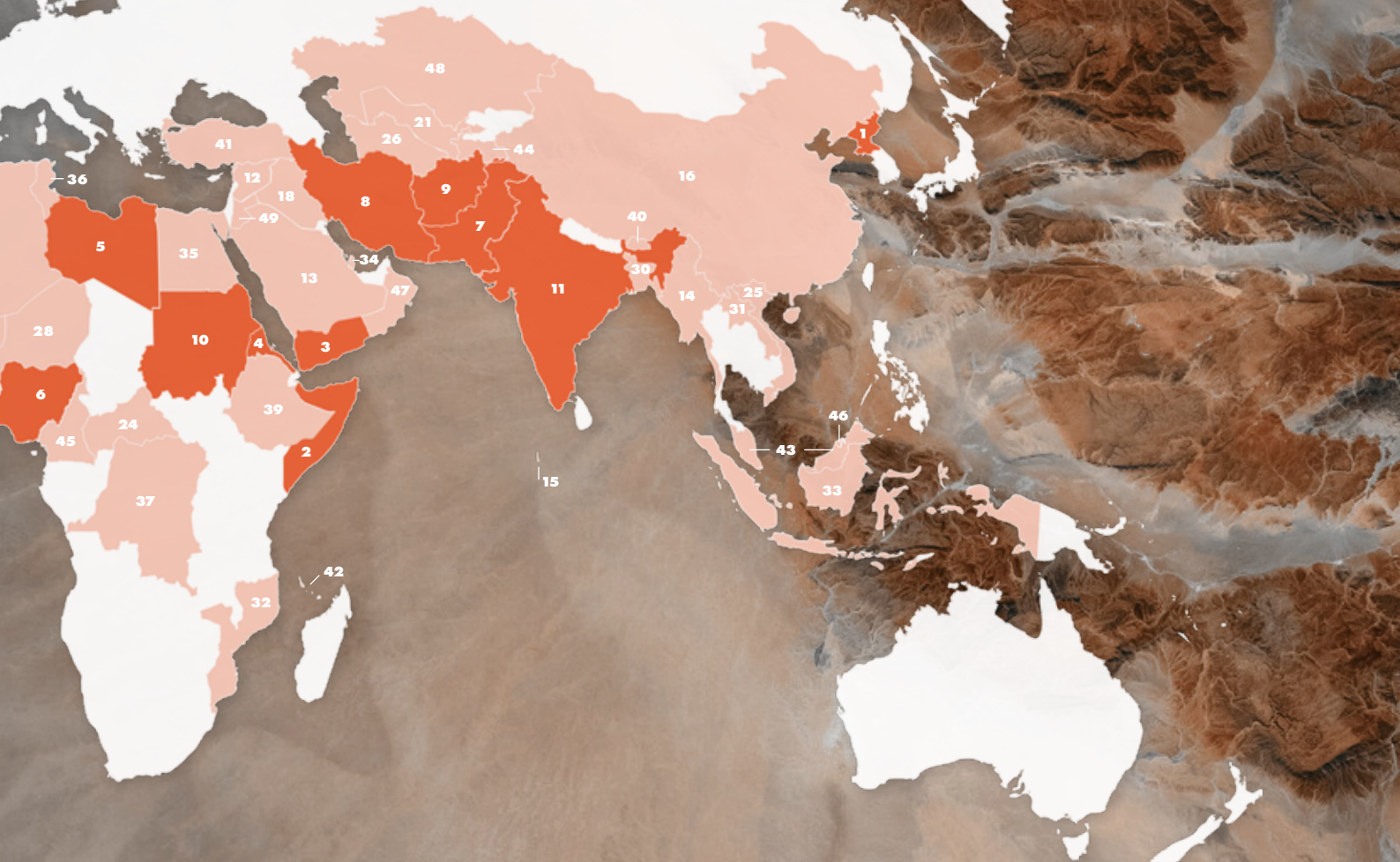
PERSECUTION LEVEL

- Extreme
- Very high



THE WORLD WATCH LIST 2023

Every Christian should know the cost of following Jesus. That's why for 30 years Open Doors has released the World Watch List, ranking the 50 most dangerous countries to be a Christian, so you can pray and support the persecuted church.



**DISCOVER
MORE AT:**

[OPENDOORS.ORG.AU/WWL](https://opendoors.org.au/wwl)
[OPENDOORS.ORG.NZ/WWL](https://opendoors.org.nz/wwl)

#19 ALGERIA

CHRISTIANS: 139,000 (<1%)

LEADER: President Abdelmadjid Tebboune

TOTAL SCORE: 73/100 – Very High

Pressure: 82%

Violence: 29%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN ALGERIA:

opendoors.org.au/algeria
opendoors.org.nz/algeria

PRAY WITH US

That the Holy Spirit will help Algerian believers to stand firm in faith.

That Christians will have opportunities to gather with other believers.

For the reopening of churches and relaxing of laws that stifle religious freedom.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Most Algerian believers are converts from Islam. They face **discrimination, harassment, and pressure** to follow Islamic customs from family members as well as the wider community.

Christians have increasingly experienced **restrictions** and pressure from state officials to renounce their faith. Laws prohibit 'shaking the faith of a Muslim,' and are sufficiently vague to be used to **target and harass Christians**. Many churches have been **ordered to close** or to cease their activities.

#20 MAURITANIA

CHRISTIANS: 11,000 (<1%)

LEADER: President Mohamed Cheikh el Ghazouani

TOTAL SCORE: 72/100 – Very High

Pressure: 84%

Violence: 8%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MAURITANIA:

opendoors.org.au/mauritania
opendoors.org.nz/mauritania

PRAY WITH US

That the government of Mauritania would be open to religious freedom.

That families of new believers would have open hearts and minds.

That God would encourage those who have lost everything for their faith.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Mauritania does not allow freedom of religion; it is illegal to leave Islam and follow another faith. Those who become Christians from a Muslim background face severe pressure from their communities. They are seen as bringing **shame on the family and are shunned**. In many cases they are **expelled** from their homes or **physically abused**.

Violent Islamic extremist groups, including a branch of al Qaeda, are active in parts of the country, posing a danger to any Christians discovered there.

#21 UZBEKISTAN



CHRISTIANS: 351,000 (1%)

LEADER: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev

TOTAL SCORE: 71/100 – Very High

Pressure: 84%

Violence: 9%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN UZBEKISTAN:

opendoors.org.au/uzbekistan

opendoors.org.nz/uzbekistan

PRAY WITH US

That secret believers will draw near to God, despite the risks.

That God will soften the hearts of those who have rejected a family member.

For bold faith for church leaders facing persecution.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Freedom of religion is severely restricted in Uzbekistan. Although the population is 96% Muslim, the government is staunchly secular and no religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed.

Church leaders are **finned, detained**, or put under house arrest in an attempt to spread fear throughout their congregations. Pastors of unregistered churches in particular have been **insulted, beaten and humiliated**.

#22 COLOMBIA



CHRISTIANS: 49,002,00 (95%)

LEADER: President Gustavo Francisco Petro Urrego

TOTAL SCORE: 71/100 – Very High

Pressure: 67%

Violence: 92%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN COLOMBIA:

opendoors.org.au/colombia

opendoors.org.nz/colombia

PRAY WITH US

For Christians living in areas controlled by armed criminal groups.

For the children of Christian families to have courage despite threats.

For gangs to see the love Christians have for their enemies and turn to God.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Guerrilla groups and gangs often see the church as a threat to their power and stability, particularly when gang members become Christians or church leaders speak out against violence and corruption.

This leads to church leaders being **threatened, harassed**, and even **killed**, not to mention the **mobility restrictions** imposed by illegal means. Gang leaders **target the children** of Christian families, trying to recruit or abduct them to undermine the church.

#23 BURKINA FASO



CHRISTIANS FACE INTIMIDATION AND TARGETED ATTACKS FROM JIHADIST GROUPS.



CHRISTIANS: 5,166,000 (23%)

LEADER: President Ibrahim Traore

TOTAL SCORE: 71/100 – Very High

Pressure: 66%

Violence: 93%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN BURKINA FASO:

opendoors.org.au/burkinafaso

opendoors.org.nz/burkinafaso

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The expanding influence of jihadist groups in Burkina Faso is having a catastrophic impact on Christians. Believers have been **targeted and killed** in villages, churches, and workplaces.

Hundreds of churches have been forced to close, with many having been destroyed. The threat from Islamic extremist groups has even spread to cities that were previously beyond their reach.

Meanwhile, in addition to being targeted by jihadists, Christians from Muslim

backgrounds face enormous pressure from families and communities to renounce their faith.

In eastern regions where Islamic law is applied by extremist groups, women and girls are highly vulnerable to **abduction**. Across the country, **sexual assault** of women and girls is a common method of attacking Christian communities, with daughters of church leaders especially at risk.

PRAY WITH US

That God will heal and comfort all those severely traumatised by jihadist attacks.

For continued wisdom and provision for Open Doors' local partners.

For the protection of believers and local partners in the country.

#24 CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



CHRISTIANS: 3,712,000 (74%)

LEADER: President Faustin
Archange Touadera

TOTAL SCORE: 70/100 – Very High

Pressure: 66%

Violence: 93%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC:

opendoors.org.au/CAR

opendoors.org.nz/CAR

PRAY WITH US

For peace and stability in the country.

For the protection of church leaders
in CAR.

That Christians will continue
to bravely reach out to their
communities.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The ongoing conflict in Central African Republic (CAR) since 2013 has resulted in thousands of Christians **losing their homes** and livelihoods, and many continue to live in camps for internally displaced people. Most of the country is occupied by armed militia groups who are responsible for a range of human rights abuses.

When Christian leaders have publicly denounced the violence, they've been **threatened**, and their **churches ransacked and torched**.



#25 VIETNAM

CHRISTIANS: 9,401,000 (9.5%)

LEADER: President Nguyen Xuan Phuc

TOTAL SCORE: 70/100 – Very High

Pressure: 76%

Violence: 41%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN VIETNAM:

opendoors.org.au/vietnam

opendoors.org.nz/vietnam

PRAY WITH US

For protection over women who are
vulnerable to trafficking.

Thank God that the church is growing
among ethnic minority groups.

That programmes run by our partners
will strengthen the church.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The communist government **monitors** Christian activity and exercises a high level of pressure on all Christians. Converts from a Buddhist or Ethnic-animist background face the most severe persecution, not only from the authorities, but also from families, friends, and neighbours.

When they convert to Christianity, their homes are sometimes **destroyed**, and they are then **forced to leave** their villages. Yet their numbers are reported to be growing.

#26 TURKMENISTAN

CHRISTIANS: 66,700 (1%)

LEADER: President Serdar Berdimuhamedow

TOTAL SCORE: 70/100 – Very High

Pressure: 83%

Violence: 3%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN TURKMENISTAN:

opendoors.org.au/turkmenistan
opendoors.org.nz/turkmenistan

PRAY WITH US

For courage for church leaders under pressure from the authorities.

For healing for Christian women who have suffered domestic violence.

That believers will be able to access Bibles and Christian literature.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The dictatorial Islamic government uses an extensive network of **police and secret services** to monitor all non-Muslim religious activities. All religious groups are required to register with the authorities, and all non-registered activities are **banned**.

Churches are the target of police **raids**, which may result in those attending being **arrested or fined**. Fines can be issued for holding illegal gatherings, possessing religious literature, and even for downloading Christian songs.

#27 CUBA

CHRISTIANS: 6,936,000 (61%)

LEADER: President Miguel Diaz-Canel

TOTAL SCORE: 70/100 – Very High

Pressure: 75%

Violence: 42%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN CUBA:

opendoors.org.au/cuba
opendoors.org.nz/cuba

PRAY WITH US

That the regime would relax its surveillance and honour religious freedom.

For encouragement for churches that feel isolated from the world.

For wisdom and courage for Christians wanting to stand up for what's right.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Cuba's communist regime is not tolerant of dissenting voices or any other institutions gaining influence or power. The church falls into both of these camps and, as a result, Christians experience persecution from the authorities.

Christians speaking out against corruption can be **arrested and imprisoned**. Government measures included arrests, **abductions**, arbitrary **fines**, close **surveillance**, **denials of licenses** and religious visas, and physical and mental **abuse**.



#28 NIGER

CHRISTIANS: 65,300 (<1%)

LEADER: President Mohamed Bazoum

TOTAL SCORE: 70/100 – Very High

Pressure: 65%

Violence: 92%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN NIGER:

opendoors.org.au/niger

opendoors.org.nz/niger

PRAY WITH US

For protection against violence from extremist groups.

For economic empowerment groups in which women learn business skills.

For God to strengthen believers who are under pressure.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Niger is a Muslim-majority nation, and Islam is regarded as being part of Nigerien ethnicity: if you are a Nigerien, you are a Muslim. Conversion from Islam to any religion is considered a betrayal, and converts to Christianity face hostility from their family and community.

They may be **rejected** by their families, chased out of the family home, or put under **house arrest**. Many converts are **denied their inheritance** rights as a form of punishment for leaving Islam.



#29 MOROCCO

CHRISTIANS: 31,300 (<1%)

LEADER: King Mohammed VI

TOTAL SCORE: 69/100 – Very High

Pressure: 77%

Violence: 29%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MOROCCO:

opendoors.org.au/morocco

opendoors.org.nz/morocco

PRAY WITH US

For Christians to have the freedom to gather.

For employment for those converts whose faith is known.

For deepening of faith for Christians across North Africa.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

In North Africa, it's a criminal offence to convert a Muslim. If Christians talk to others about their faith, they risk **arrest** and **prosecution**. Christians may be **arrested and fined** for having a Bible in their possession, or for discussing Christian faith with a Muslim.

Christians become targets for government **interrogation, beatings, or imprisonment**. Many Christians are **discriminated** against in their job searches, and finding employment becomes almost impossible.

#30 BANGLADESH



CHURCH LEADERS FACE HEIGHTENED DANGERS DESIGNED TO INSTIL FEAR INTO ALL CHRISTIANS.



CHRISTIANS: 938,000 (<1%)

LEADER: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed

TOTAL SCORE: 69/100 – Very High

Pressure: 70%

Violence: 64%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN BANGLADESH:

opendoors.org.au/bangladesh
opendoors.org.nz/bangladesh

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or tribal backgrounds experience the most severe persecution. Such believers can encounter **restrictions, discrimination, and even attacks**. Gatherings with other Christians are often done in secret.

Protestant churches that engage in outreach among Muslim communities can also face persecution. Church leaders in particular are at **risk of arrest**. The arrest of church leaders can destabilise Christian

communities and make them feel afraid to gather for worship.

Christian women and girls are highly vulnerable to persecution -- particularly converts, who are deemed to have 'betrayed' their culture and religion. This persecution can include **harassment, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, forced marriage or divorce, house arrest, and abduction**.

PRAY WITH US

That Christians facing intense pressure for their faith will be strengthened by God.

That persecutors will encounter Jesus for themselves and give their lives to Him.

For healing for those traumatised by attacks, arrests, and abductions.



#31 LAOS

CHRISTIANS: 207,000 (2.8%)

LEADER: President Thongloun Sisoulit

TOTAL SCORE: 68/100 – Very High

Pressure: 76%

Violence: 30%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN LAOS:

opendoors.org.au/laos

opendoors.org.nz/laos

PRAY WITH US

That Christians would be able to meet together without detection.

For an end to the unjust fines charged to release detained Christians.

That whole villages would come to know Christ through new believers.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians are generally viewed as Western-influenced 'enemies of the state'. The communist authorities of Laos consider most church meetings illegal, and Christians live under intense scrutiny.

Some churches are registered and **heavily monitored**, but others cannot get permission to meet and have to operate secretly. Leaders of unregistered churches have been **arrested and held** for as long as a year - their churches **forced to pay** large sums of money for their release.



#32 MOZAMBIQUE

CHRISTIANS: 18,589,000 (56%)

LEADER: President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi

TOTAL SCORE: 68/100 – Very High

Pressure: 63%

Violence: 93%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MOZAMBIQUE:

opendoors.org.au/mozambique

opendoors.org.nz/mozambique

PRAY WITH US

Pray that Christians would live boldly, despite the risk of attacks.

Pray that Open Doors' partners will reach more people in need.

Pray for wisdom and compassion towards the traumatised and vulnerable.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians face persecution from the growing presence of Islamic extremists, particularly in the north, where fighters are enforcing a reign of **terror**. People either stay in the region under daily threats of **abduction**, or they **flee** their homes and communities.

Government restrictions on freedom of religion are strict, including **bans** on all religious influence in public educational institutions and cumbersome registration requirements for religious groups.

#33 INDONESIA



CHRISTIANS FACE SOCIAL ISOLATION AND INTENSE PRESSURE TO RETURN TO ISLAM.



CHRISTIANS: 34,185,000 (12%)

LEADER: President Joko Widodo

TOTAL SCORE: 68/100 – Very High

Pressure: 66%

Violence: 77%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN INDONESIA:

opendoors.org.au/indonesia

opendoors.org.nz/indonesia

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Indonesia has taken on a more conservative **Islamic** character in recent years, which puts pressure on Christians, especially those from Muslim backgrounds.

Indonesians brought up as Muslims who become Christian believers will likely face disapproval and **rejection, verbal abuse, and social isolation**. In some cases, families will withdraw all support, and married women may keep their new faith secret to avoid the threat of their husbands divorcing them. Some women are faced

with lots of psychological abuse, including **death threats**, for practising Christianity.

If a church is seen to be preaching and spreading the gospel, they soon run into opposition from Islamic **extremist** groups, especially in rural areas. In some regions of Indonesia, non-traditional churches struggle to get permission for church buildings, with the authorities often ignoring their paperwork.

PRAY WITH US

For a more open and tolerant society towards Christians in Indonesia.

That God would comfort those rejected by their own families for His sake.

For local partners helping displaced Christians find new homes and jobs.



#34 QATAR

CHRISTIANS: 409,000 (13.7%)

LEADER: Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani

TOTAL SCORE: 68/100 – Very High

Pressure: 80%

Violence: 9%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN QATAR:

opendoors.org.au/qatar

opendoors.org.nz/qatar

PRAY WITH US

Ask God to continue to strengthen the faith of secret believers.

Thank God for the growing number of Christians in the region.

For protection for Christian migrant workers who face mistreatment.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Qatari believers are few in number and keep their faith secret. Almost all Qatari Christians converted abroad, and most do not return to the country out of fear. Converts from Islam face severe persecution, including **harassment, police monitoring, loss of status, and legal problems.**

Migrant workers, who make up the majority of the Christian population in Qatar, are not free to openly practice their faith. Telling a Muslim about Jesus can lead to **prosecution and deportation.**



#35 EGYPT

CHRISTIANS: 9,695,000 (9%)

LEADER: President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi

TOTAL SCORE: 68/100 – Very High

Pressure: 73%

Violence: 42%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN EGYPT:

opendoors.org.au/egypt

opendoors.org.nz/egypt

PRAY WITH US

That the authorities would act to protect Christians' legal rights.

For God's protection and strength for believers from Muslim backgrounds.

That the love of Egyptian Christians would draw many people to Christ.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christians in Egypt report that freedom of religion violations are mostly experienced in the community. Women who are unveiled may face **harassment.** In some cases, **abuse and violence** force Christians to leave their communities, leaving their houses and belongings to be confiscated.

Christians with a Muslim background face enormous **pressure** from their families to return to Islam. The state also makes it impossible for them to get any official recognition of their conversion.

#36 TUNISIA

CHRISTIANS: 22,500 (<1%)

LEADER: President Kais Saied

TOTAL SCORE: 67/100 – Very High

Pressure: 73%

Violence: 39%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN TUNISIA:

opendoors.org.au/tunisia
opendoors.org.nz/tunisia

PRAY WITH US

For protection and comfort for believers from Muslim backgrounds.

That God continues to make Himself known despite restrictions.

That Christians who are abandoned by their families will find support.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Tunisia is 99% Muslim. Tunisian Christians, almost all of whom are converts from Islam, are heavily **discriminated** against by family and society. If discovered, converts are subjected to **hostility** from their family, colleagues, and friends. In some cases, the aggression may escalate to **physical violence**. Usually, this backlash takes place behind closed doors.

Christian converts cannot worship openly and choose to hide their faith since it is dangerous to share their beliefs.

#37 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

CHRISTIANS: 90,570,000 (95%)

LEADER: President Felix Tshisekedi

TOTAL SCORE: 67/100 – Very High

Pressure: 61%

Violence: 93%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:

opendoors.org.au/DRC
opendoors.org.nz/DRC

PRAY WITH US

For stability and justice to return to eastern DRC.

That God gives church leaders great wisdom and strength.

For more opportunities to provide trauma counselling and aid.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

The eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is a dangerous place for Christians. **Rebel groups** are fighting for control of the area, including an Islamic **extremist** group, known as the Allied Democratic Forces, which openly and **brutally** targets Christian homes and churches.

Christian women risk **kidnapping**, sexual **abuse**, and **forced marriage**. There is little chance of justice through the legal system, and many Christians have been forced to **flee** their homes to safer villages.



CHRISTIANS FACE INTIMIDATION AND ABUSE FROM GANGS AND DRUG CARTELS.



CHRISTIANS: 125,738,000 (95.5%)

LEADER: President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador

TOTAL SCORE: 67/100 – Very High

Pressure: 63%

Violence: 83%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MEXICO:

opendoors.org.au/mexico
opendoors.org.nz/mexico

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

There are an estimated 150 organised crime gangs in Mexico, financed by powerful drug cartels. Christians living in their territories risk being targeted.

Christian leaders in particular can be viewed as a threat or defiant to a gang's authority and stability. When Christians refuse to carry out a gang's demand, or speak out against crimes, **their church is punished.**

Political instability contributes to the **lack of justice** when several pastors and priests

have been **kidnapped and held to ransom, badly beaten, or killed.**

The gangs, as de facto authorities in the most neglected areas, also give **fines** and extort money from church leaders, believing they must have access to some church funds. Christian leaders and their families are at high risk of **violence, recruitment, sexual harassment, abduction, and forced displacement**, as well as other forms of **abuse.**

PRAY WITH US

For a return of law and order to Mexico, where crime is rampant.

For God's wisdom and power for those standing up to gangs in their areas.

For safety for those who travel a long way to access Bible training or discipleship.

#39 ETHIOPIA

CHRISTIANS: 72,396,000 (60%)

LEADER: PM Abiy Ahmed Ali

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 67%

Violence: 63%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN ETHIOPIA:

opendoors.org.au/ethiopia
opendoors.org.nz/ethiopia

PRAY WITH US

For justice for Christians being denied their basic rights.

That new Christians facing persecution would know God's presence.

For Open Doors' work to disciple believers and strengthen the church.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Christianity may be the majority religion, but Islamic oppression is the main driver of persecution. People who convert to Christianity from Muslim backgrounds risk harsh mistreatment from their communities, including being forced to **flee** from their homes, and even **death threats**.

There is also persecution for Christians who move from a traditional Ethiopian Orthodox Church background to a Protestant or non-traditional denomination. They are likely to be **shunned** by their families.

#40 BHUTAN

CHRISTIANS: 18,800 (2.4%)

LEADER: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 78%

Violence: 7%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN BHUTAN:

opendoors.org.au/bhutan
opendoors.org.nz/bhutan

PRAY WITH US

That those who have lost family will have all their needs met.

That Christians will have fresh revelations of Jesus.

That God will refresh and revitalise discouraged believers.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Bhutanese citizens are expected to follow Buddhism. Converts to Christianity can be exposed to **harsh treatment** from their family and local community in attempts to pressure them into **renouncing their faith**.

No churches have official state recognition, meaning that any Christians holding a service together are worshipping illegally. Local authorities often refuse to issue Christians with the certification needed for things such as **employment and registering property**.

#41 TURKEY



ISLAM IS BLENDED WITH FIERCE NATIONALISM, LEAVING NO ROOM FOR CHRISTIANS.



CHRISTIANS: 171,000 (<1%)

LEADER: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 73%

Violence: 34%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN TURKEY:

opendoors.org.au/turkey
opendoors.org.nz/turkey

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Nationalism and Islam are intrinsically linked in Turkey, and anyone who is not a Muslim is seen to be a disloyal Turk. Aggressive rhetoric from the government has left less space for other voices and perspectives, such as Christianity. Believers are not regarded as **full members** of Turkish society.

They have **limited access** to state employment and experience **discrimination** in private employment, especially where employers have ties to the government.

Since religious affiliation is still recorded on ID cards (nowadays via electronic chip), it is easy to discriminate against Christian job applicants.

Although conversion from Islam to Christianity is not legally forbidden, converts are put under pressure by their families and communities to return to Islam. If their faith is discovered, they may be threatened with **divorce** and the **loss of inheritance rights**.

PRAY WITH US

That converts whose families have rejected them will feel loved and accepted by God.

For the government to make policies that recognise Christians as equal to Muslims.

For opportunities for Christians to share Jesus safely with friends and family.

#42 COMOROS

CHRISTIANS: 4,600 (<1%)

LEADER: President Aazali Assoumani

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 77%

Violence: 9%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN COMOROS:

opendoors.org.au/comoros
opendoors.org.nz/comoros

PRAY WITH US

That secret Christians will have access to fellowship and discipleship.

That the Holy Spirit will empower those facing pressure to stand strong.

That opportunities will emerge for Christians to boldly share their faith.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

In Comoros, choosing to leave Islam to follow Jesus is so risky that those who do so have little option but to keep their faith secret. In some parts of the country, **extremist** groups threaten believers with **violence**. In others, it can lead to **prosecution**.

It is illegal for followers of any religion except Islam to evangelise, so any Christian who shares their faith could face **legal consequences**. This will likely involve a **fine** and up to a year in prison.

#43 MALAYSIA

CHRISTIANS: 3,054,000 (9.2%)

LEADER: King Sultan Abdullah
Sultan Ahmad Shah

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 74%

Violence: 23%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN MALAYSIA:

opendoors.org.au/malaysia
opendoors.org.nz/malaysia

PRAY WITH US

That God will change the hearts of families persecuting new Christians.

That the authorities will stop interfering in Christian gatherings.

That believers will know God's love for them and reflect it to others.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Anybody who comes to know Jesus from a Muslim background is at risk for persecution by their family, community, and the authorities. They may be **arrested**, **interrogated**, **imprisoned**, or even sentenced to **death** if their faith is discovered.

All Christians are **monitored**, but non-traditional Protestant groups are purposely targeted with the aim of breaking them up, since they tend to attract more converts and be more active in sharing the gospel with Muslims.



#44 TAJIKISTAN

CHRISTIANS: 64,100 (<1%)

LEADER: President Emomali Rahmon

TOTAL SCORE: 66/100 – Very High

Pressure: 77%

Violence: 7%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN TAJIKISTAN:

opendoors.org.au/tajikistan
opendoors.org.nz/tajikistan

PRAY WITH US

For laws that allow Christians to practise their faith.

That church leaders under pressure will be equipped to lead faithfully.

That converts from Islam will find ways to encourage one another.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Tajikistan has the highest percentage of Muslims in Central Asia. Christians from a Muslim background face **rejection** and sometimes **violent assault from family** and the local community to return to Islam.

Church services are often **disrupted** and believers face **harassment and arrests** for holding private prayer meetings or possessing any Christian material. Registering churches is effectively impossible, making all Christian activities carried out by these groups technically illegal.



#45 CAMEROON

CHRISTIANS: 17,032,000 (61%)

LEADER: President Paul Biya

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 59%

Violence: 96%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN CAMEROON:

opendoors.org.au/cameroon
opendoors.org.nz/cameroon

PRAY WITH US

That the government will address the country's insecurity problems.

That the Holy Spirit will pour comfort into those traumatised by attacks.

That church leaders will be strengthened as they serve the persecuted.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

In Cameroon, those who convert to Christianity from Islam are not free to express or share their faith, and doing so can bring **hostility** from family and the local community. They are at great risk if they are even discovered to own a Bible.

The influence of **Islamic extremists** has hindered the activities of many churches. The ongoing **civil war** that's been fought since 2017 has made leaders who speak out against violence a **target** for separatist groups and the government.

#46 BRUNEI

CHRISTIANS: 53,500 (12%)

LEADER: Sultan and PM
Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 78%

Violence: 2%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN BRUNEI:

opendoors.org.au/brunei

opendoors.org.nz/brunei

PRAY WITH US

That young Christians will have the strength to hold on to their faith.

For wisdom for church leaders as they disciple believers under pressure.

That authorities will give greater freedom to those who don't follow Islam.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

It is increasingly challenging for Christians to express and share their faith in Brunei. Conversion from Islam is **illegal**, meaning converts can face enormous **pressure to renounce their faith** in Jesus.

Since Protestant Christian groups cannot be registered as churches but only as secular organisations, they are required to **submit** their financial and operational reports to the government each year. All church activities are **monitored** by the authorities and surrounding community.

#47 OMAN

CHRISTIANS: 193,000 (3.6%)

LEADER: Sultan and PM Haytham
bin Tariq bin Taimur Al-Said

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 77%

Violence: 3%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN OMAN:

opendoors.org.au/oman

opendoors.org.nz/oman

PRAY WITH US

That Omani society becomes more accepting of Christianity.

Thank God that He is revealing Himself to locals through dreams.

That local partners working in the region would serve faithfully.



WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Omanis who convert to Christianity face **pressure** from their families and, more widely, from society, to renounce their faith. They may be **expelled** from their home, and in some cases **lose their jobs**. **Disinheritance** and **losing custody** of children are common.

Expatriate Christian communities are tolerated, but experience **surveillance and restrictions**. All Christian organisations must register themselves, and their meetings are monitored to record if any Omanis are attending.



#48 KAZAKHSTAN

CHRISTIANS: 4,876,000 (25.4%)

LEADER: President Kasym-Zhomart Tokayev

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 76%

Violence: 7%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN KAZAKHSTAN:

opendoors.org.au/kazakhstan
opendoors.org.nz/kazakhstan

PRAY WITH US

For provision for Christian families struggling to earn a living.

For protection over churches meeting in secret.

That the authorities would grant Christians more freedom.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

When a Kazakh from a Muslim background becomes a Christian, they are at a high risk of being **locked up** by their families, kept from any other Christians, verbally and physically **abused**, and potentially **cut off** from their family and community.

Authorities **monitor and raid meetings** of Christians and may arrest, fine, detain, and **imprison** believers – particularly Christian leaders. Converts and church leaders are at particular risk of **losing employment** due to their faith.



#49 JORDAN

CHRISTIANS: 170,000 (1.7%)

LEADER: King Abdullah II

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 75%

Violence: 12%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN JORDAN:

opendoors.org.au/jordan
opendoors.org.nz/jordan

PRAY WITH US

For protection on those coming to faith from Muslim backgrounds.

That the authorities would stifle the growing threat of Islamic extremism.

That Christians would be respected for living lives of integrity.

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Jordan is tolerant as long as everybody stays in their religion of birth. But for non-traditional churches, those perceived to be sharing the gospel, and people becoming believers from Muslim backgrounds, there is persecution.

Christian communities are **monitored**, and those from a Muslim background face **beating, arrest, or even being killed**. Believers from Muslim backgrounds have been subject to days of **interrogation and beatings** and are pressured to inform on other Christians.

#50 NICARAGUA



CHURCHES AND THEIR LEADERS ARE LABELLED TERRORISTS AND COUP-PLOTTERS.



CHRISTIANS: 6,437,000 (95%)

LEADER: President Jose Daniel Ortega Saavedra

TOTAL SCORE: 65/100 – Very High

Pressure: 66%

Violence: 57%

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT BEING A CHRISTIAN IN NICARAGUA:

opendoors.org.au/nicaragua
opendoors.org.nz/nicaragua

WHAT'S LIFE LIKE FOR CHRISTIANS?

Churches in Nicaragua that speak out against injustice and human rights violations by the government are viewed as destabilising agents. This makes them a target for hostility, which can include **intimidation, harassment, monitoring, arrests, and even attacks**. Roman Catholic churches are particularly susceptible to opposition.

The government is particularly hostile to churches that provided shelter and care for people during the widespread protests

which broke out against the country's dictatorial regime in 2018. To this day, these churches are still experiencing retribution from the government, including **slander and surveillance**.

Meanwhile, recent elections and changes to the law have been used as a pretext to label church leaders as terrorists and coup-plotters. This has led to increasing **restrictions** on churches and other Christian organisations.

PRAY WITH US

That those affected by government hostility will be healed of their ordeals.

That government opposition will not deter Christians from boldly sharing their faith.

That the Holy Spirit will prompt those in government to see Christians positively.

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SOMETIMES I FEEL I HAVE TO HOLD IT ALL TOGETHER SO THAT WHEN MY HUSBAND COMES HOME HE DOES NOT HAVE TO TAKE ON MORE STRESS AT HOME.

HE HAS TO DEAL WITH FORCED CONVERSIONS, ABDUCTIONS OF GIRLS FROM OUR CHURCH, VISITS FROM AND TO THE POLICE AND A MYRIAD OF OTHER ISSUES... I GET TIRED.

SOMETIMES I JUST WANT TO TAKE MY CHILDREN AND MY HUSBAND AND WALK THROUGH A CLOSET, LIKE THE ONE IN CS LEWIS' NARNIA...

THEN I REMEMBER I CAN DO THAT THROUGH THE BIBLE, AND I FEEL GOD'S PEACE FLOOD ME AND ENABLE ME.

//

– Wife of an Open Doors local partner, Pakistan.

**WE BELIEVE THAT
ANY DOOR IS OPEN,
ANYTIME, ANYWHERE...
TO PROCLAIM CHRIST.**

BROTHER ANDREW | FOUNDER, OPEN DOORS

There is nowhere too difficult, too dangerous, or too dark. We are committed to supporting those who are persecuted for following Jesus, and carrying out His commission, in the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian.