

MAP OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has released its 2012 Annual Report, in which more than 16 nations have been designated as "countries of particular concern" (CPC) for their flagrant and consistent human and religious rights violations.

As an organization that closely monitors evidence of Christian persecution throughout the world, CFI has carefully compiled a list of ten of the USCIRF's top CPCs, where Christians are known to suffer extreme harassment, persecution, and even martyrdom.

Complete with urgent prayer points, CFI's list is also a call for free Christians everywhere to intercede for and mobilize on behalf of the millions of brethren that suffer daily in the name of Jesus Christ.



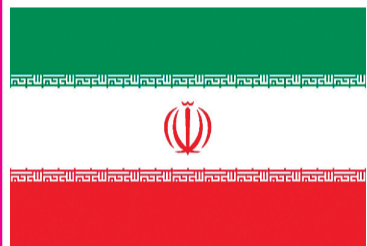
1. NORTH KOREA

Government: Communist
Religion(s): Atheist

One of the most isolated nations in the world, North Korea is well known for its long list of human rights abuses.

Kim Il-Sung-ism, named after the late dictator who passed away in December 2011, is the only acceptable religion in North Korea; all other religions, particularly Christianity, are strictly forbidden. Thousands of North Korean believers have lost their lives from severe persecution or the harsh conditions of prison or work camps.

Pray for the safety of our fellow Christians, especially those detained in prison, in this extremely hostile nation.



2. IRAN

Government: Theocratic republic

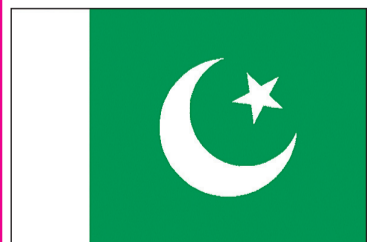
Religion(s): Muslim (98.64%), Christian (0.51%)

Christian persecution, particularly for Muslim converts, has steadily intensified in Iran in recent years, where many Christians suffer from societal ostracism, discrimination, and abuse. Because Islamic law is strictly observed in Iran - a country that has boasts the highest population of Shi'a Muslims in the world - the court system even reserves the right to execute male apostates and impose a life sentence on female apostates.

Nearly all Christian activity, including proselytizing and Bible publishing, is illegal in Iran.

And yet, despite mounting persecution and severe restrictions, the church continues to grow.

Pray that more believers would be added to the body of Christ in Iran, and that the government will one day grant equal rights to non-Muslims.



3. PAKISTAN

Government: Federal republic

Religion: Muslim (95.80%), Christian (2.45%)

Despite the constitution's provisions for religious freedom, repressive Islamic laws are increasingly being applied throughout Pakistani society - even for non-Muslims - as a fundamental Islamic presence continues to grow in the country.

In particular, many Christians are being falsely accused and imprisoned because of alleged violations of the laws, which state that blaspheming the Qur'an or the prophet Mohammed are criminal offenses, punishable by fines or even death. In November 2010, Asia Bibi, a Christian wife and mother accused of blasphemy, became the first female to be sentenced to death under the law.

Although there is a moderate level of religious freedom in Pakistan, many Christians suffer from discrimination and harassment, especially in the workplace.

Pray for suffering Pakistani Christians, particularly those in prison, and that they would continue to boldly spread the Gospel throughout the country.



4. EGYPT

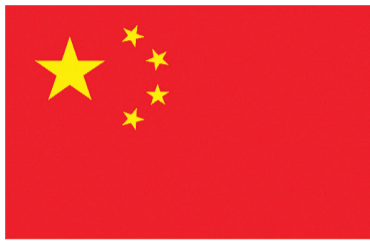
Government: Republic
Religion: Muslim (86.67%), Christian (12.83%)

In the months since the Arab Spring revolution besieged the Middle East, Egypt's Christian population has endured a surging level of violence and hostility. Ironically, this country is home to the largest Christian community in the Middle East, comprising just over 12 percent of the Egyptian population.

But since former president Hosni Mubarak resigned from office in February 2011, a fast-growing, militant Islamic presence has ignited intense sectarian conflict, in which hundreds of Christians have been harassed, physically attacked, or even killed as a result of mob violence against their homes, businesses, and churches.

Although the Egyptian constitution permits freedom of conversion, most Christian converts experience great difficulty in changing their stated religion on their identification cards; without this designation, they are still considered to be Muslim and are not permitted to marry another Christian. In addition, converts often endure great societal pressure to reconvert to the Islamic faith.

Pray that a new government will stabilize the region and provide greater security for Christians suffering persecution in this country.



5. CHINA

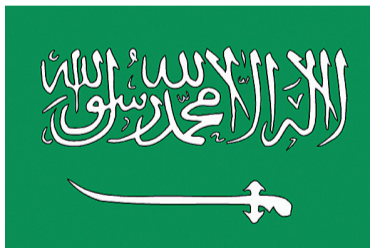
Government: Communist
Religion: Non-religious (44.36%), Buddhist (12.50%), Christian (7.92%)

Although the exact number of Christians in China remains unknown, experts place the estimate between 80 and 130 million - an incredible statistic, given that China is one of the harshest nations on earth for Christians to live.

Protestant Christianity, along with Catholicism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Islam, is one of the few officially recognized religions in China. However, state monitoring and severe restrictions imposed throughout the past decade has forced the church underground. An untold number of house church leaders, as well as other Christians, have suffered unspeakably cruel persecution through lengthy imprisonment, violent beatings, and relentless torture.

Within the past two years, Chinese authorities have launched a new assault on unregistered house churches.

Pray for the continued growth of the church in China, despite such grave persecution, as well as the safety and strength of the millions of bold believers in this restricted nation.



6. SAUDI ARABIA

Government: Monarchy
Religion: Muslim (92.41%), Christian (5.43%)

The birthplace of Islam, Saudi Arabia remains one of the top countries in the world known for its track record of human rights abuses - and harsh persecution of its Christian citizens.

No religion other than Islam is recognized or permitted, and the country's legal system adheres to a strict form of Islamic law that is enforced on all citizens, regardless of religious affiliation. Christianity, including proselytizing, gathering for worship, or distributing Bibles or Christian literature, is forbidden. In short, freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia; anyone who chooses to convert to Christianity faces the death penalty.

Pray that Saudi Christians will

be empowered to spread the Gospel throughout this Muslim nation, and that more people will come to know Christ despite great hostility.



7. NIGERIA

Government: Federal republic

Religion: Christian (51.26%), Muslim (45.12%)

Christian persecution, particularly at the hands of Islamic terrorists, has been steadily on the rise in Nigeria, where much of the country has been governed by Islamic law since 1999. In 2011 alone, as Christians continued to be targets for violence, hundreds of believers were killed and more than 400 churches burned; yet despite the rampant brutality that continues to this day, the Nigerian government does little to curb these attacks and ongoing sectarian conflicts.

Christian discrimination exists in many northern states, as there are numerous reports of believers being denied permits to build or repair places of worship; lacking equal access to education; and lack of representation in government.

Pray for the safety of Nigerian Christians, and that the government will institute fair and balanced laws that will bring peace to this troubled nation.



8. UZBEKISTAN

Government: Republic; authoritarian presidential rule

Religion: Muslim (84.93%), non-religious (13.80%), Christian (0.75%)

Religion is strictly controlled in this former Soviet nation, where many religious groups, including Christians, routinely suffer severe persecution.

Although "approved" religious communities must register with the state, registration is often delayed or even denied. Many unapproved Protestant Christians have been labeled "extremists" and are often harassed and imprisoned for conducting illegal activities, such as possessing Christian literature, evangelizing, or holding private prayer meetings.

State-controlled media also promotes discriminatory and intolerant views of minority Christians, claiming that they are "extremists" and a "danger to society."

Pray for continued growth of the born again Christians in Uzbekistan despite persecution, and that the government will grant more freedom for Christians to worship and practice their faith.



9. VIETNAM

Government: Communist

Religion: Buddhism (52.5%), non-religious (23.3%), Christian (9.4%)

One of the last remaining Communist nations in the world, Vietnam is an incredibly difficult place for Christians to live.

Despite the fact that the constitution permits freedom of worship, the Vietnamese government closely monitors and restricts the activities of many religious groups, including Christians. Ethnic Hmong Christians are especially targeted for persecution, and are often subjected to undue pressure by the authorities or even other family members to renounce Christianity. Other instances of Christian persecution include the forced closing of churches, seizure and destruction of personal property, and denial of government benefits. Many ethnic minority Protestants are also denied identity cards that state their religious affiliation. Without such identification, they can be barred from attending church services.

Pray that the church will continue to grow despite persecution, and that the Gospel message will change the hearts and minds of thousands of other Vietnamese citizens, one soul at a time.



10. ERITREA

Government: Transitional government

Religion: Muslim (50.26%), Christian (47.31%)

Despite a 2003 statement issued by the Eritrean government claiming that "no groups or persons are persecuted in Eritrea for their beliefs or religion," thousands of Christians have suffered cruel persecution in this African nation within the past decade alone.

While the government officially recognizes four religious groups - the Orthodox Church of Eritrea, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Lutheran Evangelical Church of Eritrea - all other groups, particularly evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, are considered illegal and are severely restricted in their activities. Thousands of believers are detained for their faith, often enduring terrible suffering such as forced labor, torture, and even confinement in metal shipping containers or underground barracks.

Government restrictions are especially severe for members of the armed forces, who often face punishment for possessing Bibles or other Christian literature, or attending prayer meetings.

Pray that imprisoned Christians would be strengthened in the midst of their affliction, and that the Eritrean government would ease restrictions on the church.