# International day of



# Prayer

# for the Persecuted Church

# Persecution of Christians...

Globally, there is severe discrimination and violence against individuals based on their Christian faith. More than 388 million Christians experience high levels of persecution, including physical violence, imprisonment, and social discrimination, with significant increases noted in recent years.

The guide includes information on the 10 countries facing the highest levels of persecution and hostility.

It also includes ways you can pray, a map, and definitions explaining persecuted, hostile, and monitored nations.

The Lord has given His followers the amazing privilege of helping advance His kingdom through prayer. Thank you for taking the time to learn about the highest levels of persecution around the world. Join Bridge in continuing to pray for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ who daily face the unimaginable for their faith.

As you pray, remember these are not simply people we can pray for; they are our family in Christ. We stand with them in faith, hope, and love.

***Ezekiel 22:30***
***I looked for someone among them who would stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land...***

# Ways to Prayer

**Intercessory prayer is the act of praying to God on behalf of other people.**

**Pray for Strength and Courage**

- Ask God to grant persecuted Christians the strength to endure hardships and the courage to remain steadfast in their faith.
- Joshua 1:9

**Pray for Protection**

- Pray for physical and spiritual protection for those facing violence or oppression due to their beliefs. Pray for their families and communities.
- Psalm 91:1-2

**Pray for Comfort, Hope, and Perseverance**

- Pray for those who are grieving or feel alone. Ask God to comfort their hearts, sustain their hope, and remind them they are never forgotten by HIM or HIS people.
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

**Pray for Boldness**

- Pray that the gospel will continue to spread despite opposition. Ask God to give them boldness in sharing their faith, wisdom in difficult situations, and love for those who persecute them.
- Acts 4:29

**Encourage Global Awareness**

- Pray that awareness spreads, prompting action and support from the global Christian community. Help us to remember that we are one body in Christ. When one part suffers, every part suffers
- 1 Corinthians12:26

# #1 - North Korea (East Asia)






## Overview:

North Korea was once a thriving center of Christian worship, but decades of rule by an oppressive regime have forced Christians to worship in underground settings. Christianity is brutally opposed. Anyone discovered to be a Christian or to have expressed any interest in Christ or the Bible is considered an enemy.

## Major Religion:

The North Korean government allows for no religious freedom, requiring all North Koreans to follow the Juche religion.

## Persecutor:

If discovered, Christians face harsh persecution from the government and from members of the community. Even those who are aware of Christian activity but do not report it to the government are punished as enemies of the regime. Christians are sent to prison and labor camps, where they are starved, overworked, and tortured. The government's requirement that all North Koreans act as informants applies even to families, as children are taught to spy on their parents from a young age.

# #2 - Somalia (Horn of Africa)






## Overview:

Most Somalis believe that to be Somali is to be Muslim, so those who come to faith in Christ are accused of rejecting not only their religion but also their nationality. Therefore, those who faithfully serve Christ or convert from Islam face severe persecution regardless of national laws. There are no church buildings in Somalia, and Christians must exercise extreme care when meeting in groups. It is strictly illegal to convert or evangelize.

## Major Religion:

Nearly all Somalis are Sunni Muslims, with especially radicalized views.

## Persecution:

Christians are actively pursued, and when discovered, they are immediately killed. Terrorist organizations and other Islamist groups persecute Christians, as do the government, communities, and even family members.

# #3 - Yemen (Southwest Asia)






## Overview:

For many years, the people of Yemen have suffered from civil wars and violence from Islamic extremists, including al-Qaida. Although the situation has further deteriorated since the start of the most recent civil war, the gospel has flourished, and many Yemeni Muslims have come to know Christ. Yemeni Christians have become bolder in their outreach efforts, though it is still extremely dangerous to even be identified as a Christian.

## Major Religion:

Nearly all Yemenis are Muslim

## Persecutor:

Persecutors include the government, Islamic extremist groups, communities, tribes, and families of Christian converts. Converting to Christianity from Islam is a crime punishable by death, and families consider it extremely shameful for a family member to become a Christian.

# #4 - Sudan (Northeast Africa)






## Overview:

For nearly 50 years, the Sudanese government has conducted a brutal campaign to Islamize the nation, destroying churches and imprisoning Christians while seeking to implement strict adherence to Islamic law. Until recently, the Islamization campaign also included the bombing of villages, crops, hospitals, and churches. The Sudanese government seeks to exterminate Christians.

## Major Religion:

90 percent of the Sudanese people are Sunni Muslims. 5 percent are Christians.

## Persecutor:

The Sudanese government has intimidated, arrested, imprisoned, and tortured Christians. Most Christians who have not fled the current violence must meet underground in small groups.

# #5 - Eritrea (Northeast Africa)






## Overview:

Eritrea is governed by a totalitarian regime that seeks to control every aspect of life. The government actively seeks to infiltrate underground churches and imprison members. Imprisoned Christians are not given a trial or allowed to see their families, many of whom do not know where their loved ones are or even if they are still alive. Christians simply disappear.

## Major Religion:

The population is nearly evenly divided between Sunni Muslims and Orthodox Christians.

## Persecution:

The conditions inside these “prisons” are some of the harshest in the world. Christian prisoners are provided meager rations and held in shipping containers in extreme desert conditions for years. When prisoners are released, they are blacklisted by the government and are unable to get jobs; they are watched constantly, and their families lose opportunities.

# #6 - Syria (Western Asia)






## Overview:

Syrian Christians' lives have been severely disrupted by the civil war that began in 2011. Persecution has escalated recently, bringing Syria into the top 10 in one year. Caught in the crossfire in this brutal conflict between Muslim factions, believers have been abused and attacked from all sides. More than 750,000 Christians have been driven from the country.

## Major Religion:

Sunni Muslims compose about 75 percent of Syria's population.

## Persecution:

Christians, who have historically made up about 10 percent of the population, have significantly decreased in number since the outset of the war. With the fall of the Syrian government, Islamist groups continue their efforts to drive Christians out of Syria through acts of hostility, persecution, and violence. Severe persecution usually comes from the Islamist groups. Recent attacks on Christians have heightened fears, leaving the Christian community uncertain about its future.

# #7 - Nigeria (West Africa)






## Overview:

Based in the north, Boko Haram is affiliated with al-Qaida and has also aligned itself with the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS). Although Boko Haram has weakened somewhat in the northeast, it still carries out devastating attacks in Christian communities and on army units in the region. Boko Haram is also reportedly backing ongoing attacks on Christian villages by militant Fulani Muslims, who have concentrated their attacks in the central region of Nigeria. Terrorist groups and other Muslims in the north want to drive Christians out of the region and continue their push to create a separate nation governed by Islamic law.

## Major Religion:

51 percent of Nigerians are Christians. The nation is divided between Christians and Sunni Muslims, with most Christians in the south and most Muslims in the north.

## Persecution:

The Boko Haram Islamic extremist group and militant Fulani Muslims both attack Christians throughout northern Nigeria.

# #8 - Pakistan (South Asia)






## Overview:

Most Christians are treated as second-class citizens and are forced to work long hours in labor-intensive jobs while being oppressed by schemes that keep them in bondage to their employers. Pakistan underreports its Christian population, so accurate statistics are unavailable. However, there are roughly 4 million Pakistani Christians, which is nearly 2 percent of the nation's population. Some Christians boldly share the gospel and distribute God's Word in radicalized Muslim neighborhoods and cities, which in some cases are home to Islamic extremist groups like the Taliban.

## Major Religion:

Approximately 98 percent of Pakistanis are Sunni and Sufi Muslims.

## Persecution:

Both Christian converts from Islam and Pakistanis born into Christian families are persecuted by their communities, Islamic extremist groups, and the government. Violence against Christians is on the increase.

# #9 - Libya (North Africa)






## Overview:

Libya has remained unstable and chaotic since the revolution and overthrow of its dictator in 2011. Many missionaries and indigenous believers have been killed in recent years, and gospel work in the country is ruthlessly opposed. Three opposing governments vie for control, and the conflicts have severely damaged the country's infrastructure and made gospel work in the country extremely difficult. There are few believers in Libya, and it is extremely difficult for them to practice their faith openly.

## Major Religion:

97 percent of Libyans are Sunni Muslims. 2 percent are Christians.

## Persecution:

Extremist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the self-proclaimed Islamic State (ISIS), operate throughout the country. Friends and family also severely persecute Christian converts. Christians are rejected by their families and friends. They are beaten, lose families and jobs, and are sometimes killed. It is unknown how many Christians are imprisoned in Libya.

# #10 - Iran (Southwest Asia)






## Overview:

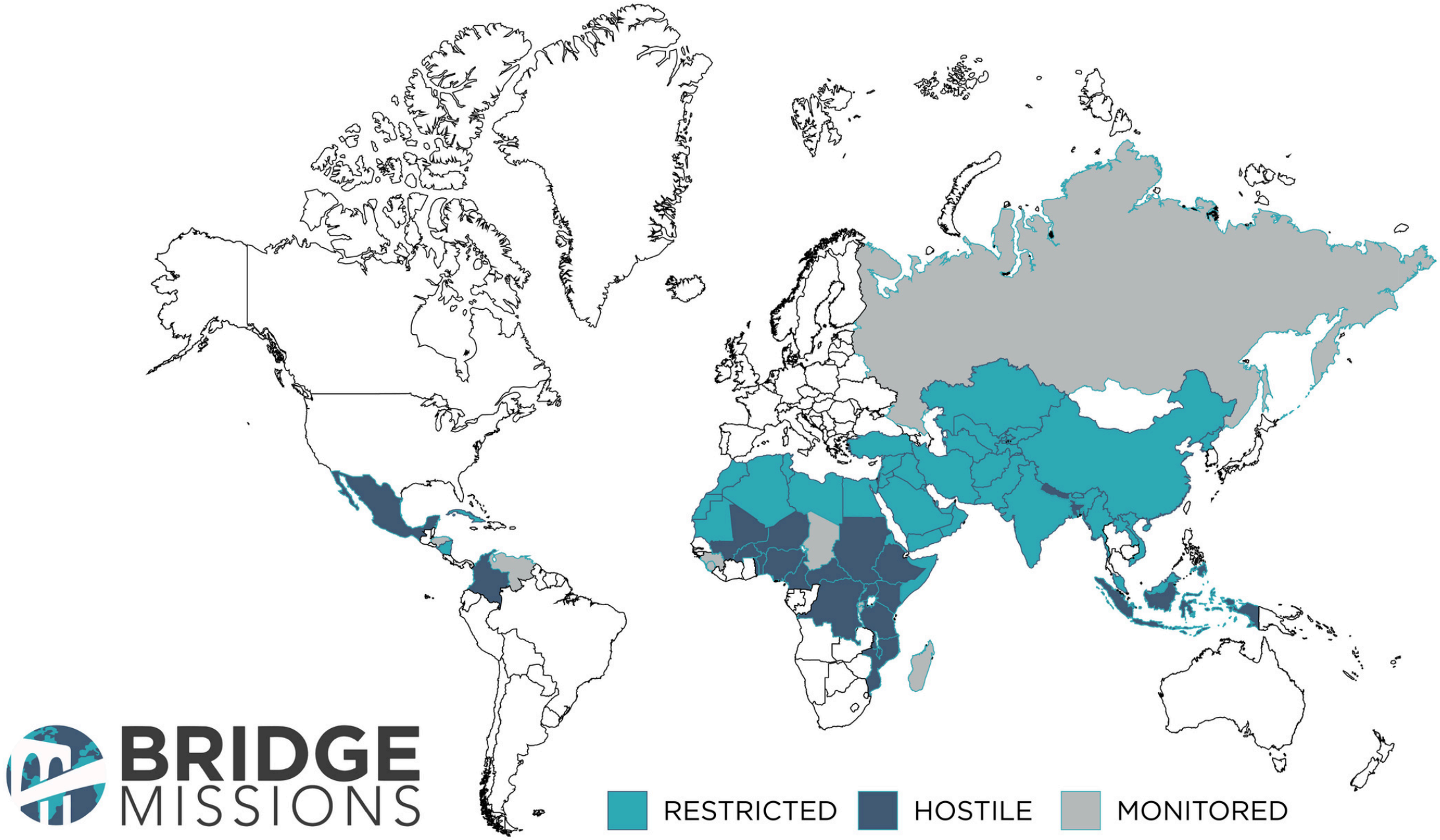
Despair has opened new doors for the gospel, which is sweeping across the nation in a bold movement. However, the government continues its attempts to stop this movement. Christian leaders and pastors are often arrested, tortured, and imprisoned, and their families are harassed. Some, left with no other options, choose to flee the country.

## Major Religion:

More than 97 percent of Iranians are identified as Muslims, but a significant segment of the population has abandoned Islam, and many have come to faith in Christ.

## Persecution:

The Iranian government is among the most oppressive regimes in the world. It is illegal to leave Islam, and Christians face the constant threat of imprisonment and being falsely charged with “acting against national security” for owning Bibles or even talking about Christ. It is difficult for a believer to find a job or a home, and they are routinely fired for no reason.


BRIDGE
MISSIONS
RESTRICTED
HOSTILE
MONITORED

**PERSECUTED NATIONS:**

Terms like “restricted nation” are used to describe countries where government-sanctioned laws or anti-Christian laws lead to Christians being harassed, imprisoned, killed, or deprived of possessions or liberties because of their witness. Also included are countries where government policy or practice prevents Christians from obtaining Bibles or other Christian literature. Christians in restricted nations also experience persecution from family, community members, and/or political groups.

**HOSTILE NATIONS:**

Terms like “hostile area” are used to identify nations or large areas of nations where governments may attempt to provide some sort of protection for the Christian population, but Christians are still routinely persecuted by family, friends, neighbors, or political groups because of their witness.

**MONITORED NATIONS:**

Areas closely monitored because of a trend toward increased persecution.

BRIDGE MISSIONS

Thank you for joining us in praying for Christians being persecuted around the world. We ask that you keep this guide and continue to intercede on behalf of our family, our brothers and sisters around the world who face insurmountable hardship for their faith and hope in Jesus Christ. They don't just need our sympathy; they need our prayers!