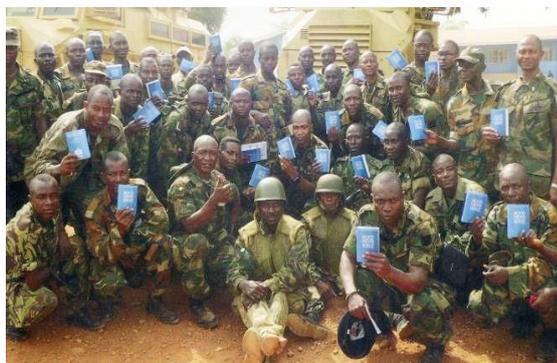


### Bibles for African soldiers

Large numbers of soldiers and police officers in several African countries have been given Bibles to help them and the traumatised groups among whom they work. The former commander of Botswana's Defence Force said, 'There couldn't have been a better gift than the Bible. This is a book of life. We use it to transform morality as well as address the wayward conduct of soldiers.' The photo below shows Bible-equipped soldiers from Sierra Leone on their way to a peace-keeping mission in Somalia.

Sower



### Tajikistan's climate of fear

A pastor in Tajikistan has been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for allegedly 'singing extremist songs in church and inciting religious hatred.' The secret police, together with officials from the State Committee for Religious Affairs, raided his church and affiliated congregations, interrogating members and pressuring employers into firing church members from their jobs. One church was closed down and in other churches Christians have stopped attending because they fear arrest.

VOM

### More changes in China

Authorities in China have long tolerated the existence of Sunday Schools and church-run summer camps, but that is now changing. In Henan Province summer camps for minors and students are now banned, and in Zhejiang a similar ban has been extended to include Sunday Schools. This is part of a nationwide pattern of official action aimed at restricting church growth.

China Aid Association

### Guyana's mixture

The nation of Guyana, on South America's Caribbean coast, often appears to have more in common with the West Indies than with South American mainland countries. The 50% of the people who call themselves Christians attend a wide range of denominations, but nominalism is a serious problem. 'Being baptized and being a Christian are the same to most people; also there's a lot of prejudice in the church,' says one local believer. Few churches have congregations that might genuinely be regarded as ethnically mixed, most being either Afro-Guyanese or East Indian. The country's main population groups are South Asian (42%), Afro-Guyanese (30%) and Amerindian (9%).

Freedom of religion means that Christian churches, Hindu temples and Muslim mosques exist almost side by side. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons and African spiritist influences add to the problems within the 'Christian' population.

On the positive side, most evangelical denominations have work among youth, and interdenominational organisations operate extensively at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Christian medical work has also been an effective ministry in a country of inadequate health services.

Operation World

### From a Bible School Principal in Kenya:

"We now have two Bible Schools, but we have only one set of your Commentary and Dictionary, and now because our two Bible schools are 10 kms apart, we are running up and down with one book. Please we are requesting for more books, so that these can equip both our libraries for our studies and teachings. Also we have friends and churches with no books at all, so they come to borrow from us. There are youth workers, evangelists, women's workers, and here in our rural community we have not enough books for all these."

### From a pastor in Zambia:

"Without your sweet seasoned books, our faith would have become as cold like freezing water. But now we are woken up because of your books."

Bridgeway

### Hand-held and solar-powered

MegaVoice is an electronic device with the capacity to hold many books and Bibles. It is becoming increasingly available to the millions who are not able to read because of illiteracy, blindness or other disabilities. These solar-powered units are now being used in over 160 countries where people can hear the message in their own language. In many of these countries mission-based access is limited because of Islam or other anti-Christian forces.

New Life

## A plea from Papua (Eastern Indonesia)

The people of Papua (western half of the island of New Guinea) are ethnically Melanesian and overwhelmingly Christian. Indonesia invaded it in 1962 and in 1969 the UN transferred sovereignty to Indonesia. Papua has since been 'Javanised', Islamised and thoroughly militarised. Papuans suffer from gross and systematic human rights abuses; indeed, they are facing 'a slow-motion genocide'.

Recently, the exiled Papuan independence leader took the risky step of presenting a petition to the United Nations. The petition, signed by 1.8 million Papuans appealing for self-determination, had been conducted in secret over several months and smuggled out of Papua. Although the UN acknowledged receipt of the petition, the Venezuelan chair of the relevant UN committee denies ever receiving it. Indonesia dismisses the petition as a hoax. The church in Papua is under threat of being neutralised in its own country.

*Religious Liberty*

## A North Korean view

A spokesman in touch with the underground church in North Korea says that Christians there are not praying primarily for regime change, money, or the freedoms that Westerners so highly value. They say they already have freedom in Christ and they pray that their lives might mirror more and more of the life of Jesus.

*VOM*

## No let-up in Eritrea

In Eritrea recently, ten Christians were arrested at a home after being betrayed by neighbours. In another town 35 were arrested at their homes after a compulsory survey exposed them as evangelicals. Elsewhere 49 Christians were arrested at a post-wedding celebration.

Eritrea's totalitarian regime is one of the world's worst persecutors. Thousands of Christians have suffered incarceration, hundreds have been severely tortured and at least 28 have died in custody because of maltreatment. Christians attempting to flee routinely fall prey to human traffickers. The aged Patriarch of the Orthodox Church, one of only three religious groups officially tolerated, has been confined to house arrest for more than ten years because of his protest against the persecution of 'Medhane Alem', a thriving revival movement within the Orthodox Church.

*World Watch*

## Hungary shows the way

In a time when much of Europe is in the grip of atheism, Hungary is a nation where Christianity is thriving. The government is unabashedly Christian, thinks Christian values are worth defending and wants to protect and even nourish the family. Hungary's constitution is explicitly Christian, and says that marriage is between one man and one woman and that life begins at conception. The Hungarian government has taken on the role of protecting Christianity and has set up an office to help persecuted Christians worldwide. It says, 'Taking in persecuted Christians is our moral and constitutional duty.'

*CBN Christian World News*

## Nigerian tensions rising

A Christian bookseller in Plateau State writes: "I know your prayers will translate into positive realities: our bookshop will survive. Your prayers for Nigeria will help us overcome the plan to Islamise the country. Just within the last two weeks, more than 200 Christians have been killed in Plateau State alone, apart from several such acts in other Christian-dominated areas of the north, and even the mostly Christian southern states. These killings are well planned and orchestrated, being tagged 'religious and ethnic cleansing.' When the killers invade any community or church, they shout 'alahu akbar'. However, God will fight all our battles and defend his treasured people in Jesus' name."

*Bridgeway*

## Iraq: Rebuilding Mosul

Mosul, once home to many of Iraq's Christians, was largely destroyed during the three years of Islamic State's occupation and subsequent defeat. But the ejection of Islamic State from Mosul does not mean that it has disappeared or that Christians have automatically regained their former properties. Many houses were destroyed and others seized by Muslim families, and most churches need rebuilding or extensive repairs. Christians who chose to remain in Iraq rather than seek refuge internationally are slowly returning to Mosul and trying to rebuild their lives and their churches. Finding employment is a major problem, and Christian aid agencies are helping with micro-loans and job creation schemes.

*Open Doors*