

## World Watch List

Countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian. The top twenty are:

1. North Korea (Dictatorial paranoia)
2. Afghanistan (Islamic oppression)
3. Somalia (Islamic oppression)
4. Libya (Islamic oppression)
5. Pakistan (Islamic oppression)
6. Sudan (Islamic oppression)
7. Eritrea (Dictatorial paranoia)
8. Yemen (Islamic oppression)
9. Iran (Islamic oppression)
10. India (Religious nationalism)
11. Syria (Islamic oppression)
12. Nigeria (Islamic oppression)
13. Iraq (Islamic oppression)
14. Maldives (Islamic oppression)
15. Saudi Arabia (Islamic oppression)
16. Egypt (Islamic oppression)
17. Uzbekistan (Dictatorial paranoia)
18. Myanmar (Religious nationalism)
19. Laos (Communist oppression)
20. Vietnam (Communist oppression)

*Open Doors*

### Social media Christian alternative

A Christian alternative to Facebook is ready to overcome media bias against the church. With *USA.Life*, people and churches will be able to share photos, gospel content, news, videos and messages. This new social network aims to challenge Facebook and Twitter, and will not collect or sell personal information. Many people feel betrayed by other social media which restrict Christians' sharing the truth and have blocked more than 70 million people.

*Christian Newswire*

### From a new convert in Ghana:

*"I used to be a Catholic but now I am saved after reading your books. We are in a very backward area and we don't have any church building but we get together and pray. There are many people that we want to save, not only Catholics but also Muslims. We need more of your books and Bibles. We have started a ministry among kids to teach them the Bible."*

*Bridgeway*

### Life in eastern Ukraine

Security officials of the self-proclaimed Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) in eastern Ukraine have raided churches, interrupted church services and arrested church leaders. This is because of the LPR's requirement for all religious associations to be registered and under its jurisdiction. Bans have been placed on a number of evangelical churches on the pretext that they are 'extremist religious organisations.'

### Push by Uganda's Muslims

In the strongly Christian country of Uganda, Islam is making rapid and aggressive advances. Muslims have been getting themselves elected to village councils across the country and now control a disproportionate number of communities. Persecution of Christians and opposition to churches is increasing. Islamic finance is well established in Ugandan banks, through which Islamic law (sharia) is gaining a foothold.

At the same time, Christian ministries are actively evangelising Muslims and many Muslims are turning to Christ, even imams of some mosques. Muslim converts are invariably disowned by their families, which means that Christians and churches have an increasing responsibility to care for and disciple them.

*Barnabas Fund*

### Indonesian students in Sydney

A group of Indonesian students in Australia are meeting weekly in the campus chapel of a Sydney university for a Christian service in their own language. The service, which started following a request from students, is now a key gospel training ground, reaching out to Indonesians who are interested in studying the Bible. Some students are now preaching for the first time and others are meeting for one-on-one Bible studies.

Although Indonesia itself is home to the world's largest Muslim population, the sheer size of the population means that the Christian population of less than 10% still numbers a staggering 20 million.

*New Life*

### Liberian tribe

After a week-long visit by national missionaries, an animistic jungle tribe in Liberia is working to build a church. The missionaries were surprisingly well received by the tribal leaders and villagers, and by the end of the week had baptised 35 people who declared they wanted to follow Jesus Christ. The chief's wife was one of the converts and she is now leading the project to build a church.

*Christian Aid Mission*

## Church growth in North India

The Delhi Bible Institute continues its program to establish permanent centres for training, teaching and equipping the church of North India. The eighth centre has just opened – part of the goal to have a centre in the capital city of every North Indian state. The northern states have the least proportion of Christians and highest proportion of Hindus in India.

Despite the Indian government's increasingly anti-Christian actions, Christianity across the north is growing. Each year these Christian centres prepare thousands of Christians for ministry by equipping churches for expository preaching, reaching non-Christians with the gospel, and training people in life skills ranging from sewing to computers. Over 500 pastors from 17 states recently went to Delhi for further training sessions, each one returning home with a bonus of 10 Bibles for distribution in a language of their choice plus Hindi-language Christian books.

The combined goals of these centres for 2019 are to equip 13,000 leaders, evangelise 33,000 people, baptise 250 converts and plant 40 new churches. DBI

## Colombia's uncertainties

With its large Catholic population (82%), Colombia is not commonly associated with religious persecution. Yet many Christians suffer severely because of their faith, especially in areas controlled by lawless armed groups and drug lords. Both far-left and far-right paramilitary groups kill, kidnap, extort money from Christians and greatly inhibit the free expression of their faith. Each year they have been forcibly closing down more than a hundred churches. Operation World

## Reaction in Egypt

Egypt's largest population of Coptic Christians is in the south, but it is meeting with increasingly violent opposition, in spite of the national government's policy of religious tolerance. When a mob of a thousand angry Muslim militants stormed a Coptic church to force its closure, local police caved in and supported the invaders. This kind of thing is happening increasingly in Egypt. The government allows the building of churches and establishes commissions to tackle sectarian conflict, while Muslims, aware of their power and confident of impunity, know they only need to riot to get their way.

*Religious Liberty*

## Public evangelism in Thailand

At Franklin Graham's *Amazing Love* festival in the predominantly Buddhist country of Thailand, 4,600 people responded publicly to an invitation to receive Christ as Saviour. The challenge is now for local churches to follow up these people with visits, literature and invitations to church to fill out their knowledge of the gospel and lead them to Christian discipleship.

*New Life*

## British review of persecution

The UK government has commissioned an independent review into the persecution of Christians. It is estimated that 215 million Christians worldwide faced persecution last year and an average of 250 Christians were killed for their faith each month. The aim of the enquiry is to find practical ways to support followers of Christianity who have been victims of a dramatic rise in violence worldwide. *Christian Today*

## *From a high school teacher in Ethiopia:*

*"It is really amazing how God is blessing the translations of your Bible explaining books. They are being seen everywhere. This is historic in Ethiopian evangelical ministries. In addition I have seen a number of your Basics books in Addis Ababa being used for street evangelism. It is a great news for all of us. Keep in touch with us and let us pray for the world together."* *Bridgeway*

## **Pakistanis set free**

*Through the generosity of overseas donors, 387 Pakistani Christian families who were bonded labourers in brick kilns are now free. Debts that they or their parents had incurred are now paid off, and they are experiencing freedom and joy not known previously. Spiritually and socially, their lives are being transformed.*

## **The Christians of Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan society is undergoing a process that could be called 'soft Islamisation.' Radical Muslims have taken control of most of the small businesses, and Islamic money from Turkey and other countries is funding most of the educational institutions. About 25% of the population call themselves Christians, but they have become increasingly marginalised and powerless. Most Christian institutions have been closed down.

*Barnabas Fund*