

South Africa’s religious freedom

South Africa's Commission for Cultural, Religious and Language Rights is seeking new laws to make it compulsory for all ministers of religion to be registered, all religious organisations to be registered and all buildings used for religious purposes to be registered, including private homes where small groups meet for prayer and Bible study. This is a serious threat to religious freedom in South Africa. Pray that Christians will be vigilant and know how to act wisely and effectively to preserve religious liberty for all.

Barnabas Fund

North Koreans at risk

A former North Korean military officer, marked for execution because of perceived disloyalty to the regime, escaped the country but then spent nine years imprisoned in three countries during his journey to freedom. Ultimately he discovered and accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ, and now runs a South Korean-based ministry that helps other North Korean defectors find their way to safety.

This man is one of 32,000 North Korean defectors who have successfully made the treacherous journey through China and other Asian nations to South Korea since 1953. There are currently an estimated 230,000 North Korean defectors in China alone, all at risk of being arrested and sent back to North Korea.

The Christian Post

From a bookseller in Angola

“Literature is one ministry God put in my heart, because I became a Christian through reading a Christian book. Books are part of my world, and I now manage a small Christian bookselling venture. The problem is to get good books in Portuguese. We are thankful for now seeing your book ‘Let the Bible Speak for Itself’ in Portuguese. Mostly we get books from Portugal and Brazil. It is hard for the shop to be self-sustaining, so it is more a ministry than a business. We started with one bookshop here in the capital Luanda, but now we have two here, and another in the province of Huambo.”

Bridgeway



Churches in Egypt

In the national government’s schemes to build new ‘eco-friendly’ cities in designated places, the President has ordered that land in these new cities should be allocated to churches as well as to mosques. The nominal Christian population in Egypt is about one-tenth of the total population.

Barnabas Fund

United States

A US church that almost shut its doors is now growing in leaps and bounds. The growth started after the church connected with community groups and began serving up free food on the streets, with no agenda other than just introducing themselves. It was hard work, but the commitment was coupled with prayer and the determination to meet the needs of others instead of catering just for themselves inside the four walls of a church.

AG News

India: church growth in spite of Hindu nationalism

Every day there are reports of anti-Christian activities in India that include physical assaults, church demolitions, forced conversions to Hinduism, false accusations and social boycotts. These anti-Christian activities have escalated under the Hindu-nationalist BJP government. Christians know that the police and government are more likely to participate in the persecution than defend them against it. Many fear that this may be the new norm for India, as Hindu radicals attack Christians and other minorities with impunity. India is now listed among the countries most dangerous for Christians.

In spite of this anti-Christian activity, the number of converts to Christianity continues to rise across India. Even in areas of violent opposition, new churches are being planted. A delegation of Christian leaders is planning to meet the Prime Minister to request increased security for religious minorities.

Burundi – out of war, a new church

From a church elder in Burundi: “In the civil war when we had to run away from our homes, one family fled to a town about 40 km away. We heard nothing from this family for five years, then one day the man came and gave us news. They began preaching the Good News, people believed and then they began to gather trees and build a temporary shelter. We helped them buy land and sheets of iron to cover the building. Today they are 115 people, and I with other elders take turns to go and help teach the believers.”

Bridgeway

Russia, Ukraine, Moldova

In contrast to the institutionalised apathy towards disadvantaged children in the Soviet era, Christians in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova are being encouraged to adopt war orphans into their families and homes. The aim is to give children the chance of a better life where the values of God’s kingdom are given priority.

FEBC

Bibles for China

In spite of government pressure to limit the influence of the church in China, people are coming to Christ in increasing numbers. An estimated one million people come to faith each year, and these all need Bibles. Earlier this year the government gave permission to print another 3.34 million Bibles (fewer than permitted previously) but lack of funds hinders printing. A quarter of the world’s non-Christians live in China and many are searching for truth and new life.

Bible Society

Social media in the Middle East

Christian ministries are using social media as an effective outreach tool in the Middle East. A platform called *Pure Heart of the Middle East*, which focuses on sharing Christian testimonies, is inexpensive to run and makes response from interested people easy. Those who respond are immediately put in contact with pastors and volunteers waiting to have conversations. In the past few months, 35 people, all from a Muslim background, have professed coming to faith in Christ and are now being disciplined through a Facebook platform.

New Life

Zimbabwe’s overcomers

From a local pastor: “Our hyperinflationary economy fuelled by a chaotic political situation has crippled us. National unemployment figure is 90%. In our church, the aged, the young and the non-professional are all without regular or consistent income. Our community is rural and this is where people are suffering most. Hence the church is affected also. Last month our average Sunday attendance was 75 and the offering \$US2.30. People have little money or food. Yet despite the economic hardships, the women of the church continue to work freely among the orphans, poor and elderly in the community. They clean, gather firewood, wash clothes and last month provided 2,457 plates of food to more than 120 children.”

Bridgeway

Asian one-liners:

Half the Philippines’ 109 million population is under the age of 24.

The military regime in Myanmar would like to destroy Christianity, which it calls ‘the C virus.’

Christians in Japan add up to less than 1% of the population.

FEBC

No let-up in Eritrea

The harsh dictatorship in Eritrea shows no signs of easing. The chair of the Eritrean Evangelical Alliance has been held in custody, incommunicado and without charge or trial, since his arrest in 2004. In May this year, 170 Christians, including children and the elderly, were arrested. Although 50 were subsequently released, the rest are still in custody.

Indefinite military service is still in force in Eritrea, with police and military increasingly resorting to flash raids to conscript children forcibly. There are an estimated 175,000 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia, a large proportion of them being unaccompanied minors. In spite of risky border crossings, Eritreans are fleeing to Ethiopia at the rate of four thousand per month. Most hope that human traffickers will get them through Sudan and Libya to Europe, though if they get there they usually find that Europe was not the Utopia they expected.

Religious Liberty/Open Doors

Over-crowded Jordan

In relation to its population, Jordan has the second highest number of refugees in the world. These include 660,000 from Syria, 65,000 from Iraq and 10,000 from Yemen. These refugees live in camps as well as in urban and rural areas. In spite of international aid programs, 93% live below the poverty line. Manara, a local Jordanian evangelistic and humanitarian ministry, has seen much fruit through its programs, among both Christian and non-Christian refugees.

Manara