

Iran’s Muslims converts

The Islamic regime that governs Iran does not allow religious conversions out of Islam. It punishes converts as infidels and apostates, yet continues to count them as Muslims. This is nothing but a grand deception, designed to hide the truth of the people’s disillusionment with Islam.

According to a new poll by the Group for Analysing and Measuring Attitudes in Iran (GAMAAN, a secular non-profit institute in the Netherlands), only 32 percent of Iranians consider themselves to be Shia Muslims. GAMAAN found that, while 78 percent still believe in God, about half have rejected their religion. Six percent of the people have converted to another faith, including 1.5 percent who now identify as Christian. That amounts to well over a million in Iran’s 80 million population.

Religious Liberty

Burundi: churches in remote areas

A Burundian Christian writes: “In the civil war days when we had to run away, one family who fled to a village in another province began preaching the Good News and some believed. We heard nothing from this man for five years, then one day he came to us and said they had gathered trees and built a temporary shelter for the young church. Today they are 115 people and wanting to construct a permanent building.

“I take turns with three other church leaders from here to go and teach the believers. We especially want to establish their church elders because we cannot always go from here every week. In another area with a similar history, the church now is nearly 200. We keep on encouraging them to raise their faith. With our little means we have begun the building project.”

Bridgeway

Eritreans in Israel

Eritrean Christian asylum-seekers in Israel continue to suffer from the oppressive treatment of the Israeli government. Marginalised and in low-paid jobs, they suffered further when 20% of their earnings were taken and placed in a fund that they could access only if they voluntarily left Israel. Last year they received some relief when the Israeli Supreme Court repealed this law. These Christians, who had endured imprisonment, torture and human trafficking, hoped to find safety and security in Israel. They are grateful for some respite and pray that the Lord will further soften the hearts of the Israeli government towards them.

Barnabas Fund

Thai study courses

Currently 30,000 people in Thailand are doing Bible correspondence courses in response to Christian radio broadcasts. Thailand is a religiously tolerant country, but Buddhism is so much part of Thai culture that those who show interest in the gospel often have difficulty making a clear-cut commitment to become disciples of Jesus Christ.

FEBC

From a Jordanian church ministry

“It is a very difficult living situation in the refugee camp near the Syrian border. Families struggle to survive and face life alone, with no access to basic life supplies and medical help. We are distributing supplies such as food packages and heaters, as it is getting colder and the winds are harsh. We also deliver goody bags for the children to enjoy.

“The camp school is a tent where students of all ages attend. To encourage these families look after themselves and earn an income, a new project has started to provide families with a few sheep. As the sheep grow, people will benefit from their milk and meat and sell them as well. Another new ministry in the refugee camp is a day clinic where local doctors give their time to help.”

Manara

El Salvador’s growing church

In the Central American country of El Salvador, the evangelical church grew from 2% of the population in 1960 to more than 30% within fifty years. Bible teaching and discipleship training are necessary to counter a tendency to shallowness and to meet the challenge of large-scale migration from rural areas to the cities. There are active Christian ministries in most colleges and universities.

Operation World

Most dangerous places to be a Christian

1. North Korea
2. Afghanistan
3. Somalia
4. Libya
5. Pakistan
6. Eritrea
7. Yemen
8. Iran
9. Nigeria
10. India

Open Doors

China's official surveillance

China has more surveillance cameras than any other country (eight of the world's ten most monitored cities are in China), and now has a 'DNA Skynet' program to catalogue all of the nation's 700 million males. From this they can build a genetic map which, together with data gathered from cameras, can unlock the identity of every person in the nation.

As the government's crackdown on church meetings intensifies, so does its attempt to stifle Christian internet activity. The online Chinese church has experienced such explosive growth during the coronavirus pandemic that some reports speak of 'near revivals' through digital transmissions. But the government has a frightening capacity to interfere in online activity and seeks to silence Christians and anyone else it perceives to be a threat to its ideology.

Kyrgyzstan's village fellowships

The church in Kyrgyzstan may be small, but it is growing steadily. In one strongly Islamic region there are dozens of village fellowships with 5 to 15 adult converts from Islam in each. The greatest persecution occurs when the first few Muslims come to Christ in a particular village. Opponents watch them closely, so pastoral visits usually take place secretly at night or in the nearest city. This makes it difficult for new believers to get the care and teaching they need, but perseverance is paying off as more mature believers care for and teach the new believers. Across the nation there are 259 registered evangelical churches, 32 of which have been registered since April 2019.

Barnabas Fund

Officialdom and the Russian church

In principle, freedom of religion is guaranteed under the Russian Constitution, but in practice many Russian Christians do not enjoy religious liberty. Since 2016, more than 1,300 cases have been brought against Christians, often on the charge of 'illegal missionary activity,' with a conviction rate of 92%. Most of the charges were for distributing religious literature on the street without authorisation.

Russian law gives authorities sweeping surveillance powers. One church in Moscow has its services interrupted most Sundays by police who take photos inside the church to identify ways in which they claim the church is violating the law. But in another case, a Russian Christian won a landmark case when the court overturned her conviction and fine for allowing church members to meet in her house for payer.

Nevertheless, the government pursues a path of hindering all churches except the Russian Orthodox. A new law, if enacted, will make it illegal for pastors trained outside Russia to preach in a church or Bible study group unless they first re-train in Russia. But such re-training is difficult because of licensing restrictions that prevent many Christian theological institutions from operating.

Persecuted Church

Very few Libyan Christians

Only God knows the number of national Christians in Libya, but the number is very small. Most are secret believers because of the dangers they face for having left Islam. Social media play a major part in the limited sharing of the gospel that is possible. One story comes from a student who, being very ill, decided to go to a church for help and was healed. He decided to follow Christ, posted his story online and got 4,200 responses. Ask the Lord to continue his work of drawing Libyans to himself.

Barnabas Fund

Among the Ethiopian Orthodox

"When I went to this town, I met with twelve Orthodox Church clergymen to show them the gospel. These priests did not own Bibles and knew only the traditions of the church. So I gave them Bibles, exercise books and pens, then began to teach them lessons on the gospel. I was a priest once, so I know their problems. The question most often raised is salvation through doing the correct traditions and activities. Praise God, some of these clergymen repented and believed when they understood the gospel. But then news of our gathering reached to the church authorities, so I had to change to meeting in another place for safety."

Bridgeway

North Korea

The percentage of North Koreans who are exposed to the Bible is increasing steadily despite extreme persecution. Bibles are still finding a way of getting into North Korea. However, people caught with a Bible or religious pamphlets have been executed by firing squad and others have been locked in electrified cages.

The Christian Post

From South Sudan

"Believers in a new church in Juba had special gospel meetings with a singer from Egypt who joined them. We all went to the meeting in the open air under big mango trees. The attendance was 700 on the first day, and 850 on the last day. Many confessed their sins and trusted the Lord. This is an open country for the gospel, but there is also a lot of sinful behaviour and wrong doctrines."

Bridgeway