

Christians in Afghanistan

A 2013 estimate put the number of Christians in Afghanistan at between two and three thousand, up from a couple of hundred a decade earlier. An optimistic recent estimate put the figure as high as 10,000. In 2019, as the number of children born to converts grew, a number of Afghan Christians (believed to be about 30) included their Christian affiliation on their national identity cards so that future generations would not have to hide their faith. Now, with the Taliban takeover, these Christians, along with all who cooperated with the U.S. and its affiliates, are in serious danger as the Taliban tracks down all those it sees as enemies. Reports indicate that some Christians have already been killed because of Bible downloads discovered on their phones. Most have now turned off their phones, which makes contact with each other almost impossible. They need our prayers.

New Life

Croatian initiative

The government of Croatia, nominally a Roman Catholic country, is providing scholarships for young Christians from contexts of persecution in Africa, Asia and the Middle East to study at Croatian universities. This is an alternative to scholarships offered by wealthy Muslim countries that use such incentives to convert citizens of poor countries to Islam. The Croatian government has been overwhelmed with applications.

Barnabas Fund

From an evangelist in Zimbabwe

"We have many congregations in our province and we organize an annual large gospel outreach every year at one of our congregations. This year it was in Gutu town 208km away. It was through sacrifice that we accepted to preach there. But there was a disappointingly low turnout, because people have no money for bus fares. In Zimbabwe it has been difficult to live for decades now."

Bridgeway

More good news from Egypt

Local Christians in Egypt say that their situation is better today than anyone can remember. Humanly speaking, this is because of the efforts of President al-Sisi (a Muslim), who is quick to support them verbally and practically if anti-Christian incidents occur. Although there have been a few kidnappings of Christians, the government has helped get the hostages released. Al-Azhar University now controls most of the mosques, so that the extremist Muslim Brotherhood has become much less influential. Pray that Muslim citizens in general will follow their president's lead in treating the Christians as equals.

Barnabas Fund



State 'religion' of North Korea

North Korea is probably the world's most totalitarian state and has the strictest communist rule. It is a place of terrible persecution under the despotic rule of President Kim Jong-un. Tens of thousands of Christians have been starved, tortured and worked to death in political labour camps (called 're-education' camps) because of their faith. The harshest and most inhumane punishments in such camps are often reserved for Christians. The above picture shows citizens of North Korea bowing before giant statues of founding leader Kim Il-sung and his son Kim Jong-il (whose son Kim Jong-un is the current leader). Kim Il-sung established the state-propagated ideology of *Juche*, or human 'self-reliance', which is in effect a religion requiring worship of Kim Il-sung and his successors.

Barnabas Fund

The churches of Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, only one church has gained registration in the last decade, even though the minimum requirement of ten members is lower than in most Central Asian countries. Churches are often raided by officials who harass Christians by intimidation, blackmail, searches, seizure of property and huge fines. Children and teenagers under the age of 18 are forbidden to attend church or participate in church events. The government seems keen to eradicate Protestant churches.

Barnabas Fund

Ukraine's radio services

One radio ministry in Ukraine is specifically for soldiers in the conflict zone. Other services include a helpline to those who feel insecure and confused in a time of widespread uncertainty. Broadcasters pray for more suitably gifted Christian counsellors and pastoral leaders.

FEBC

Eritrean courage

Eritrea, sandwiched between Ethiopia and the Red Sea, is a brutal dictatorship where hundreds of Christians have been imprisoned for years without trial. But in a surprising turn of events a few months ago, 70 Christians were unexpectedly released. Among these was Twen Theodoras, aged 37, who had been imprisoned for 16 years because of her faith. She had survived imprisonment in a shipping container and the hard work and inadequate food of a labour camp, all the time leading and caring for other women prisoners. Now released, she refuses to escape to a better country but is determined to stay in Eritrea and keep serving God among her suffering fellow-citizens.

Barnabas Fund

FROM NIGERIA

Some welcome news . . .

Fifteen more students abducted from a Christian boarding school in Kaduna State in Nigeria's Middle Belt have been released on health grounds after spending 48 days in captivity. The students were among 120 kidnapped by gunmen from a Christian High School in early July.

Twenty-eight hostages were freed at the end of July and others have escaped their captors. About 65 students are still in the hands of the abductors.

New Life

. . . and an eloquent request

"We are extremely glad to write to you to engage your biblical items and other pertinent books that you consider substantial assistance to the realisation of our Christian lives. We humbly request you to please help us with 100 books at your disposal that we may share among these converted Muslims and other born again Christians. Thank you for optimistic deliberation of our request, for we want to revive many souls for Christ Jesus so that the goodness of God will blow upon them."

Bridgeway

The Bible in Morocco

The Old Testament in Moroccan Arabic (Darija) should be completed by the end of this year. The New Testament was published in 2012, so Christians in Morocco will soon be able to read the whole of God's Word in a familiar and easy language. As converts from Islam, they are not officially recognised, but if they keep their gatherings discreet the authorities do not harass them. They have a moderate amount of freedom in a country which is almost 100% Muslim.

Barnabas Fund

Alaskan strip club re-purposed

In Anchorage, Alaska, a building that was once a strip club has been converted into a home for a church. Turning a show floor into a sanctuary, and a private lap dance room into a place for youth ministry, are just a few of many changes that took place when the property was bought by the daughter of a former exotic dancer. According to its mission statement, the church's aim is to 'create an environment that is welcoming, encouraging, fervent, family-orientated, Bible-based and one that shares Christ.'

Christian Post

China: Although China was the first country impacted by the Covid crisis, China's Bible Society Partnership reports that in 2020, 73,080 Bibles were distributed free around the country.

Sower

A song in Mozambique

A group of new Christians in one region of Mozambique were restricted in their praise and worship because the predominant religion in their region had banned tribal dances and singing. The communal Christian worship lacked something until on one occasion, after a preacher had finished preaching, a lady began singing. She was then joined by a man and soon everyone was singing in a variety of rhythms, pitches and tunes. The words sung were a repetition of the message that had just been preached, and what began as a strange mix of noises soon became a beautiful song. When it ended, people commented that the song of God deep in their hearts could no longer be kept inside.

World Outreach