



2016 GLOBAL REPORT

On Where Christians
Are Persecuted Today



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Introduction

VOM's 2016 Global Report on the persecution of Christians worldwide has been created to help guide your prayers for our persecuted brothers and sisters in some of the world's most dangerous places for Christians. The 68 countries in this report have been arranged by region and are identified as Restricted, Hostile or Monitored. Each entry also includes information on life for Christians in the country and, for most countries, how VOM is working to help them.

You are welcome to print multiple copies of the report to share with your friends and family, Bible study or small group. If you would like to post the digital copy online or share copies for other reasons, please visit vombooks.com/permission, where you will find an online permission request form.

Thank you for joining in fellowship with our persecuted brothers and sisters by remembering them in prayer (Heb. 13:3).

Restricted

This includes countries where government-sanctioned circumstances or anti-Christian laws lead to Christians being harassed, imprisoned, killed or deprived of possessions or liberties because of their witness. Also included are countries where government policy or practice prevents Christians from obtaining Bibles or other Christian literature.

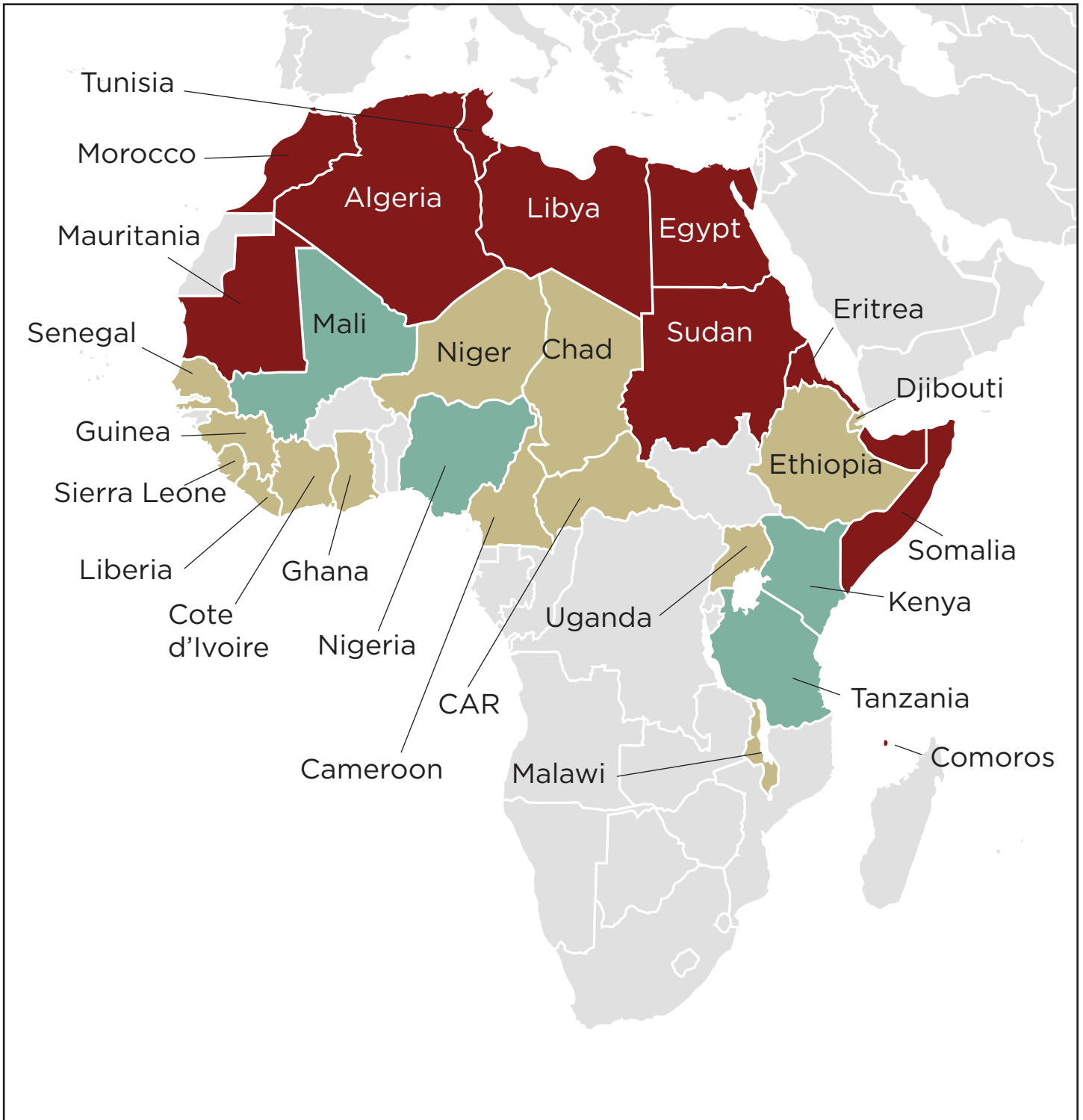
Hostile

This includes nations or large areas of nations where governments consistently attempt to provide protection for the Christian population but where Christians are routinely persecuted by family, friends, neighbors or political groups because of their witness.

Monitored

These are areas being closely monitored by VOM because of a trend toward increased persecution of Christians. The frequency and severity of persecution do not currently meet the criteria of the Hostile category.

Africa





ALGERIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Muslim 95.1%, Christian 1.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Description: Despite being a large exporter of gas, Algeria has widespread poverty and unemployment, particularly among the young. The country suffers from an ongoing Islamist insurgency, and al-Qaida has been responsible for several kidnappings and bombings there.

Life for Christians: Algerian Christians face persecution from family, neighbors, employers, Muslim extremists and the government. The constitution names Islam as the official state religion and prohibits practices considered contrary to it. Several new mosques have been built in the past few years as fundamentalists go from village to village spreading Islam. Because of open harassment of Christians entering and leaving church buildings, many believers meet in house churches.

VOM Work: VOM supports Christians in Algeria by providing Bibles, Christian films and other tools of encouragement to help spread the gospel. We have also arranged for lawyers to represent Christians accused of proselytism.



CAMEROON

Monitored

Major Religions: Christianity 53.4%, Islam 24.4%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Paul Biya

Description: Cameroon's president was reelected for a third term in 2011 after term limits were removed.

Life for Christians: While Cameroon is a majority Christian country, the northeastern part of the country, which is majority Muslim, has been drawn into the regional Boko Haram Islamist insurgency.



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

Monitored

Major Religions: Christianity 73.8%, Islam 14%

Prevalent Ideology: Syncretistic Christianity

Leader: Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza

Description: Decades of political turmoil and conflicts with neighboring countries have caused C.A.R. to remain one of the least developed countries in the world. The central government is unstable.

Life for Christians: Believers in C.A.R. are caught between Seleka, a rebel group made up of Islamist fighters, and the anti-Balakas, a counterinsurgency group that targets not only Seleka, but Muslim civilians as well. Thousands of people have been displaced by this conflict. Solid spiritual guidance and Bible teaching are unavailable for many Christians, who tend to mix traditional animist beliefs and practices with their Christian faith. Most have no church affiliation.

VOM Work: VOM distributes Bibles through local believers.





CHAD

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 54.7%, Christianity 35.6%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Idriss Déby

Description: Most of Chad's population relies on subsistence farming and livestock, though the country has recently become an oil exporter and has a wealth of gold and uranium.

Life for Christians: Though Chad is considered a secular state and promises freedom of religion, Muslims control most aspects of government and business. Islam continues to spread, and many Muslim schools and mosques have been built in Christian communities, causing tension.

VOM Work: VOM supports the widows of martyred Christians.



COMOROS

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 98.5%, Christianity 1%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Ikililou Dhoinine

Description: Years of internal political disputes have created an unstable government. One of the world's poorest countries, Comoros depends heavily on foreign grants and technical assistance.

Life for Christians: Though the constitution guarantees equal rights for all citizens, certain laws and policies restrict the freedom of religions other than Islam. Christians cannot proselytize and usually suffer societal discrimination and pressure to conform to Islam. This intimidation keeps many people away from church, and the very few Christians who openly practice their faith do so in association with established groups such as the Catholic Church.

VOM Work: VOM supports front-line workers.



COTE D'IVOIRE

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 43%, Christianity 32.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Alassane Dramane Ouattara

Description: Increasing violence has characterized the Ivory Coast since the November 2010 election, with attacks carried out along political, ethnic and religious lines.

Life for Christians: The country has experienced growing religious segregation, with Muslims mainly in the north and Christians in the south. By law, citizens have freedom of religion, but authorities in some regions have imposed restrictions on the number of members allowed in a church and have seized church property. Pastors have also been arrested and imprisoned. During times of heightened political turmoil, Muslim extremists have burned churches and killed pastors.

VOM Work: VOM has provided sewing machines and grinding machines to widows of slain pastors to help them support themselves. VOM has also provided bicycles, motorcycles and megaphones to pastors for use in public preaching and church planting.



DJIBOUTI

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 97.3%, Christianity 1.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Ismail Omar Guelleh

Description: Djibouti is Africa's third-smallest nation, and Islam is the official state religion. However, three Christian groups are officially recognized by the government: French Protestant, Roman Catholic and Ethiopian Orthodox.

Life for Christians: Christian foreigners have religious freedom, but proselytism is discouraged. Citizens who express an interest in Christianity face the risk of persecution from families and friends. Muslims who convert to Christianity are generally isolated, beaten and sometimes killed for abandoning Islam. In some areas of the capital it is forbidden to practice any religion other than Islam.

VOM Work: VOM supports a safe house for believers who have been threatened by their communities.



EGYPT

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 86.3%, Christianity 13%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Abdelfattah Said El-Sisi

Description: Though its economy is the second largest in the Arab world, Egypt struggles to support the growing population. Poor living conditions and limited job opportunities have spawned public discontent.

Life for Christians: Despite its outlawed status, the Muslim Brotherhood continues to target Christians through periodic violence and harassment, particularly in Upper Egypt. The government has failed to protect Christians, most of whom are Coptic Orthodox Christians. Repressive laws and discriminatory policies restrict Copts from freely practicing their faith.

VOM Work: VOM sponsors a Christian book store, provides job training and medical assistance to believers, and supports a Christian radio broadcast. VOM also provides a safe house.



ERITREA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 47.4%, Christian 48.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Dictatorship

Leader: President Isaias Afworki

Description: Eritrea remains under the control of the sole political party and has become one of the most secretive nations in the world. The country faces drought and food insecurity.

Life for Christians: The government instituted a registration requirement for religious groups, but no registrations have been granted. The government arrests those involved in unregistered groups. Those arrested are never formally charged, and they are denied legal counsel and family visits. Religious prisoners are sent to the harshest prisons and receive the cruelest treatment. Christians are pressured to recant.

VOM Work: VOM supports 228 of the neediest families of Christian prisoners.



ETHIOPIA

Monitored

Major Religions:

Christianity 60.1%, Islam 34%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Mulatu Teshome Wirtu

Description: Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country and has the second largest population. It is also one of the poorest nations in the world.

Life for Christians: Ethiopia was reclassified from Hostile to Monitored this year. Though there is a large Muslim population, the Islamic extremism affecting other African nations is not as widespread in Ethiopia. Attacks against Christians by radical groups are rare in Ethiopia, but one believer was killed in a church attack in October.

VOM Work: VOM is sponsoring training for pastors and supporting front-line workers.



GHANA

Monitored

Major Religions: Christian 62%, Islam 22%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President John Dramani Mahama

Description: Ghana has enjoyed relative stability since independence in 1957. Stable leadership and a solid education system have helped maintain harmony in this multi-ethnic country.

Life for Christians: While 60 percent of Ghanaians claim to be Christian, church attendance is never more than 10 percent. Islam has been growing at a steady pace through birthrates, immigration and conversion. In addition, Muslims receive benefits such as funding for primary education and scholarships for study in Muslim nations. In Muslim-majority areas, religious tension and persecution of non-Muslims is increasing.

VOM Work: VOM supports church planters and distributes audio Bibles.



GUINEA

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 88%, Christian 4.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Alpha Conde

Description: Guinea is one of the poorest countries in West Africa, with most of its people living on less than \$1 a day. After years of Marxist and then military control, Guinea held democratic elections in 2010.

Life for Christians: Christians are a small minority and are concentrated in the capital of Conakry and the southeastern forests. Christian converts living in the border areas are ostracized by Muslim family members. Some have had spouses and children taken away and have been beaten when they refused to recant. Churches have been burned, and Christians told they will be forced into reconversion ceremonies.



KENYA

Hostile

Major Religions: Christianity 76.7%, Islam 12.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Christianity

Leader: President Uhuru Kenyatta

Description: Most Kenyans live below the poverty line. The government provides shelter to refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and other countries.

Life for Christians: The coast and northwestern part of the country have traditionally been Muslim, and Muslims are attempting to establish Shariah law. Christian converts from Islam are subject to harassment, violent attacks and other forms of persecution. Somali Islamic militants are committing acts of violence within Kenya's borders at an increasing rate. Terrorists have attacked several churches and killed pastors and other Christians, including children.

VOM Work: VOM supports the families of those killed in attacks, and provides encouragement and basic needs.



LIBERIA

Monitored

Major Religions: Ethnic Religions 45.3%, Christianity 36.8%, Islam 16.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Christian

Leader: President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Description: Liberia's greatest challenge is recovering from two civil wars. Recently, the Ebola virus has also had a devastating effect on the country; many people live in poverty and have little access to sanitation facilities.

Life for Christians: The church in Liberia is often characterized as being scripturally ignorant and materialistic. Islam is spreading, not only through the Mandingo tribe but also more broadly. Ethno-religious violence occasionally flares up between Muslim Mandingos and other groups. VOM contacts report that Christian converts are mistreated by Liberians from the Mandingo, Fula, Soso, Gbandi and Vai tribes, all of whom are fundamentalist Muslims.

VOM Work: VOM distributes Bibles and supports evangelistic outreach events.



LIBYA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 96.1%, Christianity 3.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam/military dictatorship

Leader: Speaker Aqilah Salah Issa

Description: Libya is an oil-rich country that suffered under a dictatorship until civil war broke out. A newly elected government has brought hope for stability, but there are concerns over the rise of Islamist militancy.

Life for Christians: An interim constitution protects religious freedom, but the government continues to prohibit proselytizing Muslims. Attacks on Christians and their property are not investigated. There are no churches in Libya, but believers are allowed to worship in their homes. Extremist groups have carried out numerous attacks against Christian minorities.

VOM Work: VOM has helped establish an Internet church through secure sources, using social media and other methods to locate the believers.



MALAWI

Monitored

Major Religions:

Christianity 73.7%, Islam 21.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Christian

Leader: President Arthur Peter Mutharika

Description: Malawi is one of the poorest nations in the world and is densely populated. It relies heavily on foreign aid.

Life for Christians: Freedom of religion is protected in Malawi, and there is a large population of evangelical Christians. The relationships among religious communities are relatively harmonious, but an increase in Islamic activities has created tensions between Muslims and non-Muslim groups.

VOM Work: VOM supports church planters and provides them with ministry tools.



MALI

Hostile

Major Religions: Islam 87.6%, Christianity 2.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita

Description: Landlocked and poor, Mali had been relatively stable until the 2012 coup by Tuareg separatists. Since then, Islamists have taken control of northern Mali.

Life for Christians: The country has a strong tradition of tolerance and openness toward all religions. Members of different religious groups often attend each other's weddings, baptisms and funerals. However, in strict Muslim communities, conversion to Christianity is unacceptable, and several new believers have had to flee for their lives.

VOM Work: VOM supports a safe house for believers whose lives are threatened by their Muslim families.



MAURITANIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.5%, Christianity 0.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz

Description: Mauritania, a mostly desert country, is one of Africa's newest oil producers. Many of its people are nomads. The north is predominantly Arab-Berber, while the south is populated mostly by black Africans.

Life for Christians: Islam is the official religion, and those who leave Islam can lose their citizenship and face criminal charges for apostasy. There are churches, and Christians may possess Bibles. Printing or distributing Bibles or other Christian literature is prohibited. Christian converts from Islam are expelled from their families, lose their jobs and frequently are beaten.

VOM Work: VOM supports a safe house for Christian converts who are in danger.





MOROCCO

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.6%, Christianity 0.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: King Mohammed VI

Description: The Kingdom of Morocco is known as the “Arab West.” Its rich culture is a blend of Arab, Berber, European and African influences.

Life for Christians: Though all citizens are considered Muslim, Christian leaders estimate that there are 4,000 citizens, perhaps more, who regularly attend secret house churches. Conversion is not illegal, but converts can be prosecuted for “shaking the beliefs” of a Muslim and sentenced to prison for up to three years. Those found guilty of proselytism or converting others also face criminal punishment or expulsion from the country.

VOM Work: VOM is helping three bold Christian leaders set up a café business to provide income. We also distribute New Testaments and SD cards with the *JESUS Film*, *The God Story* and praise and worship songs.



NIGER

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 94.3%, Ethnic Religions 5.1%, Christianity 0.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Issoufou Mahamadou

Description: Located on the edge of the Sahara desert, Niger is plagued by frequent droughts as well as widespread food shortages. It remains one of the poorest countries in the world.

Life for Christians: Although there are few Christians, believers are permitted to build churches and schools and practice their faith. Nigeriens are free to change their faith, but in January 2015 Muslim youth led a violent attack on Christians. The attack shocked many in the country, and Islamist activities in Libya, Mali and Nigeria are a growing concern.

VOM Work: VOM supports pastor training.



NIGERIA

Hostile

Major Religions: Christianity 50.4%, Islam 43.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Maj. Gen. (ret.) Muhammadu Buhari

Description: Nigeria’s newly elected government faces the difficult challenge of defeating Boko Haram militants, who have killed thousands. Decades of corruption have prevented economic growth in this oil-producing nation.

Life for Christians: Religious and ethnic tensions in Nigeria have led to the country’s division into a predominantly Christian south and Muslim north. Islamic extremist groups have targeted Christians in both the Middle Belt and states in the north. Boko Haram members are particularly violent. They are believed to have abducted hundreds of young women, seriously wounded numerous men and women, and killed at least 15,000 people since 2009.

VOM Work: VOM hosted a conference for front-line ministry workers in northern Nigeria. In addition, VOM is helping Christian girls who have been held captive by Boko Haram, and we help provide medical care for persecuted Christians.



SENEGAL

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 90.1%, Christianity 5.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Macky Sall

Description: Senegal has a stable government and is often upheld as one of Africa's model democracies. Agriculture is the main source of revenue.

Life for Christians: Senegal is a secular state with freedom of religion, but Muslims who convert to Christianity are ostracized by their families and communities and are sometimes beaten and poisoned. Christians in Senegal face increasing threats from Islamic militant groups. In some villages, Muslims have destroyed Christians' homes and fields, stolen their property and beaten them.

VOM Work: VOM supports several evangelists working with unreached groups.



SIERRA LEONE

Monitored

Major Religions: Islam 59.7%, Christianity 13.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Ernest Bai Koroma

Description: Sierra Leone has experienced substantial economic growth in recent years. The Ebola virus has hit the country particularly hard.

Life for Christians: By law, Sierra Leone has freedom of religion. Ethnic religions, the occult and witchcraft are common practices, and Islam is currently on the rise, with mosques being constructed in many communities. Christian converts are stoned and poisoned and have had their homes burned down. Pastors have been seriously beaten and churches destroyed. VOM-supported evangelists reached out to Muslims as part of Ebola-education teams to help stop the spread of the disease and to share the gospel.

VOM Work: VOM supports front-line workers who are reaching Muslims for Christ.



SOMALIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.6%, Christianity 0.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

Description: The country was without a government for two decades until 2012. The al-Shabab terrorist group, which merged with al-Qaida in 2012, controls most of southern Somalia.

Life for Christians: A small, low-profile Christian community of less than 200 exists, but non-Muslims who openly practice their faith suffer harassment. There are no public places of worship for non-Muslims, and believers meet in homes. Conversion from Islam is socially unacceptable. Al-Shabab executes known converts or those found with Christian literature.

VOM Work: VOM supports multiple evangelists, all converts from Islam, in an area of high persecution. We also support the families of those killed for their faith.



SUDAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 90.1%, Christianity 5.0%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir

Description: Sudan has had long-running internal conflicts, both in the western Darfur region and between the Arab-Muslim north and the black-Christian south. Southern Sudan seceded after a 2011 vote.

Life for Christians: Conversion from Islam is punishable by death. The government prosecutes those accused of apostasy, applies a strict interpretation of Islamic law and harasses the country's Christian community. Recently, the government has confiscated church property and supported attacks on churches. In the Nuba Mountains, the government carries out an ongoing bombing campaign against the Christian population.

VOM Work: VOM is providing approximately 100,000 people in the Nuba Mountain region with medical supplies and Bibles. VOM also supports evangelists in the region.



TANZANIA

Hostile

Major Religions: Christianity 45.6%, Islam 37.3%, Ethnic Religions 15.4%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President John Magufuli

Description: Tanzania is one of the more stable African nations, though its citizens remain poor. Though different in culture, language and ethnicity, Zanzibar remains tied to Tanzania.

Life for Christians: Religious tensions between Christians and Muslims have been growing, as Islamic extremism moves in from northern Africa. In Muslim-majority Zanzibar, Christians have long faced harassment and societal pressure, and converts face death threats. Similar problems have recently arisen on the mainland as well, leading to riots and church burnings.

VOM Work: VOM is assisting persecuted believers with legal representation, school expenses for children and Bible distributions.



TUNISIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.2%, Christianity 0.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Beji Caid Essebsi

Description: Despite an anti-extremist past, militancy is an increasing concern today in Tunisia.

Life for Christians: It is not illegal to convert from Islam to another religion, but converts to Christianity face pressure from their family and community. Some Tunisian Christians have received violent threats from family members. Islamic religious education is mandatory in public schools, and the government continues to imprison people for speech deemed blasphemous or offensive.

VOM Work: VOM partners are distributing printed and digital Bibles as well as Christian DVDs. VOM also supports a safe house for women who are persecuted for their faith.



UGANDA

Monitored

Major Religions: Christianity 85.3%, Islam 8%

Prevalent Ideology: Christian

Leader: President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni

Description: Uganda continues to recover from civil war and economic devastation. Influence from the so-called Lord's Resistance Army has diminished, but still exists.

Life for Christians: Uganda remains a strongly Christian nation, with high church attendance. However, radical Islam's influence has been growing throughout the country, and Christians have been driven out of some rural areas. Christian converts from Islam face family pressure and harassment from their Muslim communities. A number of young people who converted to Christianity have been severely beaten and injured by their parents. Pastors and churches have been attacked, and some converts have even been killed after their faith became known.

VOM Work: VOM supports the distribution of Bibles in areas with a heavy Muslim influence and provides assistance to believers who have been kicked out of their house or threatened with death because of their conversion to Christianity.

Asia Pacific





BRUNEI

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 66.1%, Christianity 11.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Sultan/Prime Minister Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

Description: The same family has ruled Brunei for over six centuries. Oil and natural gas drive the economy, and the government provides for all medical services and education.

Life for Christians: Shariah law dominates the legal system, and Christians are not allowed to share their faith. Islam is the only religion allowed to be taught to children of Muslims. Muslim parents are prohibited from letting non-Muslims care for their children. Muslims who convert to Christianity can lose custody of their children. The Anglican, Methodist and Catholic churches are the only churches legally registered in Brunei.

VOM Work: VOM smuggled Bibles into the country for three years, effectively meeting the need for Bibles in the nation by 2011, but we continue to monitor the need.



CHINA

Restricted

Major Religions: Non-religious 44.8%, Christianity 7.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Communism

Leader: President Xi Jinping

Description: China is the world's most populous country and the largest exporter of goods. The communist government maintains strict control and censors the press, publishing and the Internet.

Life for Christians: Only the five officially recognized religions are guaranteed religious freedom by the constitution. Christians in both registered and unregistered churches face harassment, arbitrary arrests, fines, denials of justice, lengthy prison sentences, and the closing or destruction of their churches. Many pastors are arrested in the name of "social order" and accused of being cult leaders. Printers in China risk imprisonment to meet the huge demand for Bibles.

VOM Work: VOM supports small underground Bible schools in China and also supports printing operations to help meet the demand for Bibles, Sunday school materials and other Christian literature.



INDONESIA

Hostile

Major Religions: Muslim 80%, Christian 12.9%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Joko Widodo

Description: Indonesia, an archipelago of thousands of islands, is the world's third most populous democracy and the largest Muslim-majority nation. It continues to struggle with poverty and corruption.

Life for Christians: Though it has a reputation for tolerance, discrimination against religious minorities has increased. Local authorities close churches based on the retroactive enforcement of a law that requires the approval of 60 nearby residents before a church can be established. Though the rule is supposed to apply to new construction, it has been used repeatedly against long-established churches. Religious freedom is legally protected, but Christians often face discrimination from the Muslim majority. New converts face community harassment and family pressure.

VOM Work: VOM is assisting Christian refugees with basic needs and medical care. We are distributing Bibles and helping train Bible school students who will go into ministry in Muslim areas.



LAOS

Restricted

Major Religions: Buddhism 57.2%, Christian 3.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Communism

Leader: President Lt. Gen. Choummali Saignason

Description: Laos, which is extremely rural, has plans to improve its poor economy through hydropower operations. Ruled by the Communist Party, all activities are monitored by the government.

Life for Christians: Although the constitution protects religious freedom, a decree requires Christians to register all activities. The government often prevents the construction of new churches as well as Christian funerals and holiday celebrations. Believers are frequently harassed, evicted from their homes, forcibly relocated, denied education, arrested and charged with false or trumped up accusations.

VOM Work: VOM provides radios to people in remote villages so they can listen to Christian broadcasts. We also support front-line workers, help fund church building projects and sponsor discipleship and training conferences.



MALAYSIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 55.8%, Ethnic Religious 16.4% Christian 8.4%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: King Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah

Description: Malaysia has a vibrant economy, with two regions separated by the South China Sea. Ethnic Malays are favored by law, and the socioeconomic differences between ethnic and religious groups have caused division.

Life for Christians: Islam is the official religion, and all ethnic Malays are considered Muslim. It is illegal for ethnic Malays to convert to Christianity, and those found guilty of apostasy can face the death penalty in some states. The government restricts Christian literature in the Malay language. Other ethnicities have religious freedom, but proselytization of Muslims and speech that insults Islam are considered crimes.

VOM Work: VOM supports evangelists and front-line workers who share the gospel throughout Malaysia.



MYANMAR / BURMA

Restricted

Major Religions: Buddhism 75.2%, Christianity 8.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Buddhism/Military dictatorship

Leader: President Htin Kyaw

Description: Myanmar, also known as Burma, is one of the poorest countries in Asia. About one-third of its population lives in poverty, and human trafficking is a major problem.

Life for Christians: A series of race and religion bills has been presented to the parliament with the intent of making Myanmar a Buddhist-only nation. Churches and seminaries must be registered with the government, and independent house churches are illegal. The import of Bibles in indigenous languages is prohibited, and religious publications are censored.

VOM Work: VOM provides projectors and other resources to help front-line workers share the gospel. VOM also assisted with the construction of a footpath between nine villages in order to make travel easier for evangelists.



NORTH KOREA

Restricted

Major Religions: Juche 99.5%, Christian 1.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Juche/Communism

Leader: Kim Jong Un

Description: North Korea remains one of the most oppressive regimes in the world and is among the worst violators of human rights.

Life for Christians: The state religion of Juche requires absolute obedience to the Kim family. Those who engage in Christian activities are subject to arrest, torture, imprisonment and sometimes execution. Those sent to labor camps are forced to work long hours with little food, water or rest. Though the country boasts of its churches, they are used mainly for propaganda purposes.

VOM Work: VOM sponsors balloon launches of gospel tracts and Bibles. We also support a training program to help defectors integrate into South Korean society.



PHILIPPINES (MINDANAO)

Hostile

Major Religions: Christianity 91%, Islam 4.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Benigno Aquino

Description: Mindanao is the second largest island in the Philippines, a region marred by decades of violent guerrilla warfare. A peace deal is underway to grant Islamic leaders control over five predominantly Muslim provinces.

Life for Christians: Though a predominantly Catholic country, Christians living in Mindanao are often isolated, live in impoverished conditions and face continual risk of persecution by Muslim rebel groups. Pastors and Christian leaders are targeted for their evangelistic activities. Muslim insurgent groups also steal land and crops, hijack motorbikes, and raid villages, and sometimes abduct villagers to use as human shields while fleeing from the military.

VOM Work: VOM helps front-line workers by providing motorbikes and supporting theological training schools. VOM also supports pastoral conferences on overcoming persecution.



VIETNAM

Restricted

Major Religions: Buddhism 55.9%, Christian 9.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Communism

Leader: President Truong Tan Sang

Description: Vietnam is a one-party Communist state. It is a major manufacturing center and a growing consumer market.

Life for Christians: The government controls all religious activities. Religious organizations are required to register, and Christians and churches face land confiscations. In particular, minority groups face government harassment. Pastors and churches are subject to arrest, interrogation and beatings. Local authorities in rural areas target new believers for especially harsh treatment, including village expulsion.

VOM Work: VOM trains hundreds of Christian leaders and supports tribal pastors in remote villages.

Latin America





COLOMBIA

Hostile

Major Religions: Christianity 94%, Non-religious 2.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Marxist terrorism

Leader: President Juan Manuel Santos Calderon

Description: Colombia suffered from a decades-long conflict between government forces and armed insurgent groups funded by the drug trade. Since peace negotiations in 2012, the government has regained control of lost territory.

Life for Christians: Paramilitary groups and guerrilla rebels view Christians as a threat to their movement. In FARC-controlled areas (red zones), guerrillas have killed Christians and made it difficult for them to evangelize or meet for worship. Pastors and other Christian leaders are targets of harassment, assault and murder. Fear of retribution has caused many Christian leaders to refrain from seeking government protection.

VOM Work: The terrain in some remote areas is difficult to traverse, so VOM has purchased boats to help pastors in their ministries. VOM has also distributed 10,000 Bibles in rural Colombia.



CUBA

Restricted

Major Religions: Christianity 56.2%, Non-religious 23.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Communism

Leader: President Gen. Raul Castro Ruz

Description: The withdrawal of Soviet aid in 1990 caused an economic downturn in Cuba, resulting in the rationing of energy, food and consumer goods.

Life for Christians: Churches and other religious communities are required to undergo an invasive registration process with the Ministry of Justice. Restrictive laws as well as government-authorized surveillance and harassment allow the government to limit and monitor religious practice. Individual churches are prevented from maintaining their own finances, and any community deemed too independent of government control is targeted for harassment, such as fines, mob attacks, destruction of property and and short-term arrests of leaders.

VOM Work: VOM is supporting a children's retreat for 1,400 Christian children, who are often ridiculed and held back at school because of their faith.



MEXICO (SOUTHERN)

Hostile

Major Religions: Catholic 70.2%, Evangelical 14.5%

Prevalent Ideology: Catholic Syncretism

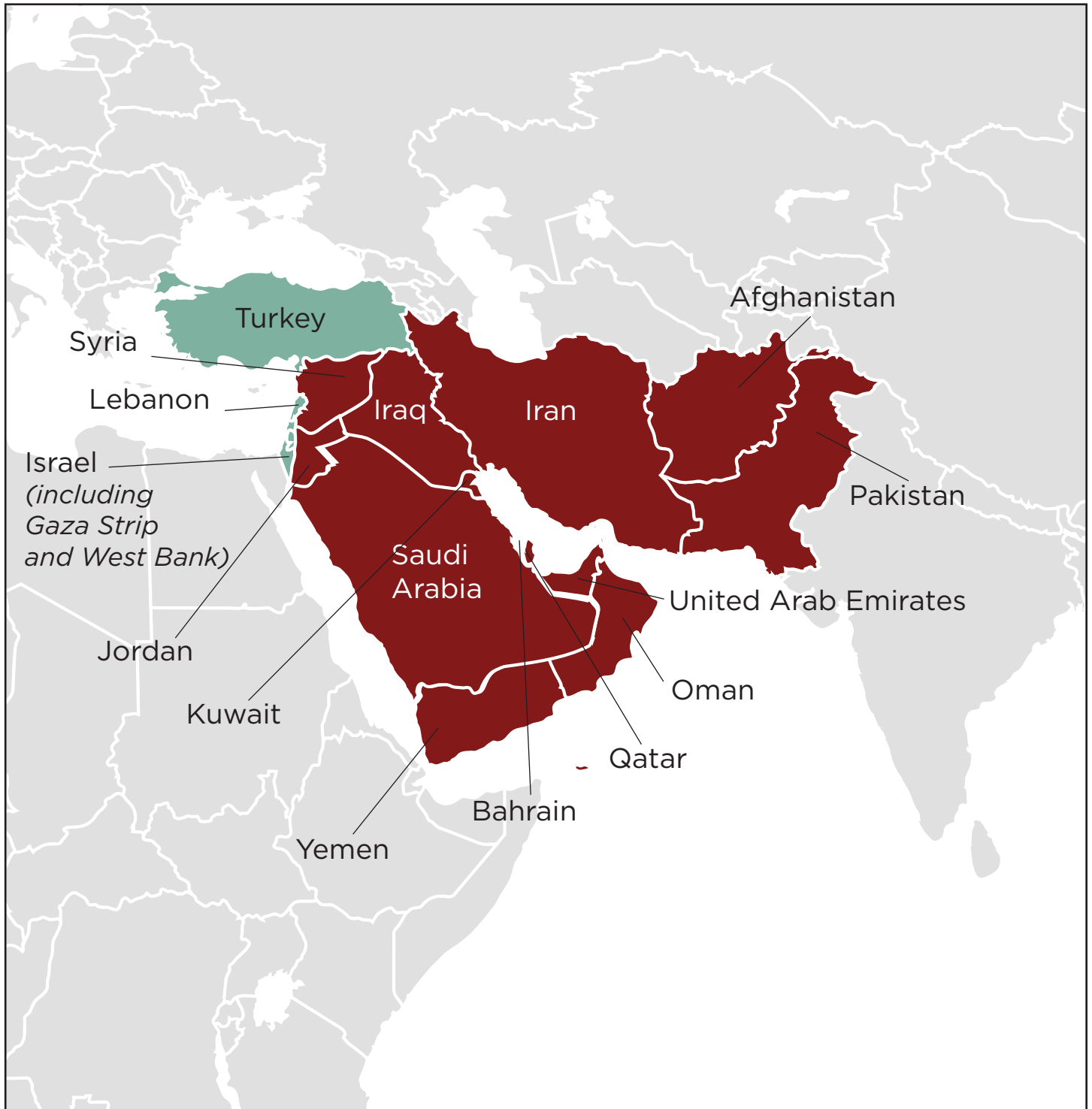
Leader: President Enrique Peña Nieto

Description: Mexico has the second largest economy in Latin America, but rural areas are often neglected.

Life for Christians: Rural Catholics in the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero (among others) see evangelicals as a threat to their way of life. Local leaders also view them as a threat because they don't participate in town rituals involving heavy drinking and worship of saints and other deities. Some villages post signs reading, "No Other Religions Allowed." Evangelicals are often expelled from their communities, losing land, homes and crops. Pastors and Christian workers have been threatened with death.

VOM Work: VOM supports front-line workers who share the gospel and plant churches in these regions.

Middle East





AFGHANISTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.8%, Christianity 0.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Ashraf Ghani

Description: The Taliban has regained strength since its overthrow in 2001, increasing its control particularly in the south and east. The country's economy relies heavily on the drug trade as well as foreign aid.

Life for Christians: Afghan Christians must hide their faith and cannot worship openly. Many have left the country, becoming refugees, in order to practice their faith. Believers gather in homes or other small group venues. Proselytizing is strictly forbidden by the Quran and Sharia law. Kidnapping, torture and beatings are routinely employed to force Christians to renounce their faith.

VOM Work: VOM ministry partners encourage, equip and serve local believers inside and outside Afghanistan by providing Bibles, discipleship training and various forms of practical and spiritual assistance.



BAHRAIN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 83.8%, Christianity 8.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa

Description: Bahrain's Shia Muslim majority is often at odds with its Sunni-led government, causing civil unrest. The country is known for petroleum processing and has become an international banking center.

Life for Christians: Though the constitution names Islam as the state religion, the government officially recognizes several Christian denominations. However, imprisonment awaits those who produce and distribute anything criticizing Islam. Muslims are forbidden to change their religion, and those who become Christians face imprisonment or beatings by family members.

VOM Work: VOM supports front-line workers who are active evangelists inside Bahrain. VOM also provides Bibles and other Christian literature to encourage and equip believers in the country.



IRAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam

Prevalent Ideology: Islam 98.7%, Christianity 0.8%

Leader: Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei

Description: Islamic clerics assumed power under the ayatollah in 1979. The nation became an Islamic republic under Shia Islam. Today, the country is divided between moderates and hardliners.

Life for Christians: Iran remains one of the most difficult nations in the world in which to be a Christian. Since President Hassan Rouhani took office in August 2013, the number of individuals in prison because of their beliefs has increased, and Christians are especially targeted. Over the past year, Iranian authorities have raided church services, threatened church members and arrested and imprisoned worshipers and church leaders, particularly Christian converts from Islam. Currently, there are approximately 90 Christians either in prison or awaiting trial.

VOM Work: VOM is sponsoring the printing and distribution of at least 137,000 Bibles in Iran. VOM also supports training focused on discipleship and church planting, as well as Christian satellite broadcasts into the country.



IRAQ

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 95.4%, Christianity 1.4%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi

Description: Iraq's last authoritarian leader fell in 2003, leading to more stability under elected officials. The Islamic State (IS) invaded Anbar and Nineveh provinces in 2014, displacing more than 1.5 million.

Life for Christians: Christians, especially those in traditional Christian communities, have been leaving Iraq since 2003, but the 2014 IS invasion of Iraq dropped the population to nearly zero. As the Sunni rebels entered the Nineveh Plains, Christians fled in droves to the semi-autonomous state of Kurdistan in northern Iraq. Their homes and goods were destroyed and seized by the militants. Today, after two years of displacement, the future looks bleak, and their main concern is to give their children a better future. However, during this time of suffering, many traditional Christians have discovered a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Converts and evangelicals throughout Iraq experience persecution from family members and society.

VOM Work: VOM is contributing food, shelter, medical assistance and other forms of emergency aid to displaced Christians. VOM is also providing support and training for a number of front-line workers and pastors throughout Iraq.



ISRAEL (INCLUDING GAZA STRIP AND WEST BANK)

Hostile

Major Religions: Israel — Judaism 77.0%, Islam 17.3%, Christianity 1.5%
West Bank/Gaza — Islam 87.4%, Christianity 1.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Democracy

Leader: Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu

Description: Israel has been in a decades-long conflict with its Palestinian and Arab neighbors over land, the status of Jerusalem and the status of Palestinian refugees. The militant group Hamas maintains control of the Gaza Strip, and the Palestinian Authority governs the West Bank.

Life for Christians: Tension exists between differing religious and ethnic groups, though most persecution against Christians comes from radical Muslims. Societal attitudes toward missionary activity (especially aimed at Jews) is mainly negative, and Jewish activists have been known to spray anti-Christian slogans and graffiti on churches. Government policy supports the free practice of religion, but legal discrimination occurs against religious minorities. Christians in Gaza are often coerced to convert to Islam. Christian converts from Islam in the West Bank and Gaza are threatened by government authorities and extremist groups, while those in Israel often face persecution from family members.

VOM Work: VOM supports a church network of more than 500 people who reach out to Israeli Arabs with evangelistic activities. We also support Messianic Jews who are targeted for their faith in Christ and provide food assistance to several Christian families in Gaza. In addition, VOM funds outreach and training for those working in the most hostile parts of the West Bank.



JORDAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 96.5%, Christianity 2.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: King Abdallah II

Description: Though it has few natural resources, this small kingdom has played a critical role in fighting Islamic extremist groups in the Middle East.

Life for Christians: Islam is the official state religion. Religious freedom is a right for all citizens, but the constitution prohibits any religious practice that conflicts with Islamic law. Christians face abuse and discrimination by the Muslim majority and can be prosecuted for proselytizing Muslims. Muslims are prohibited from converting to other faiths. Those who do can lose their civil status rights and are often severely persecuted by family members or others in the community.

VOM Work: VOM helps Iraqi Christian refugees and supports churches that reach out to Muslims, including Syrian refugees. In addition, VOM provides safe houses for Christian converts from Islam.



KUWAIT

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 86.2%, Christianity 8.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah

Description: Kuwait is a small, oil-rich country at the northern tip of the Persian Gulf. It was the first Arab country in the region to have an elected parliament and in 2005 became the first to grant full political rights to women.

Life for Christians: Though freedom of belief is a constitutional right, other laws restrict religious freedom and are enforced by Kuwait's government. While the government financially supports Sunni Muslims who proselytize foreign residents, non-Muslims are forbidden from sharing their faith. Laws also prohibit apostasy and blasphemy. While the majority of Christians are foreigners, there are believed to be a few hundred Kuwaiti believers.

VOM Work: VOM provides ministry materials and support for evangelism that reaches throughout the Arabian Peninsula.



LEBANON

Hostile

Major Religions: Islam 57.2%, Christianity 32.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Prime Minister Tamam Salam (interim)

Description: Lebanon is an important cultural and commercial hub in the Middle East. It endured a long civil war and is currently hosting around 1 million refugees from the conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

Life for Christians: Many Christian converts from elsewhere in the region seek sanctuary in Lebanon, where religious freedom is legally protected. The constitution ensures that government positions be equally divided between Maronite Christians, Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims. Christian converts from Islam are persecuted by family and community members, and Christian leaders have been targeted by Islamic extremists influenced by Hezbollah or Syrian extremist groups.

VOM Work: VOM is assisting local churches and front-line workers who are meeting the needs of refugees as well as sharing the gospel with them.



OMAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 89.4%, Christianity 2.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Sultan and Prime Minister Qaboos bin Said Al-Said

Description: Oman is the oldest independent state in the Arab world, and most there follow the Ibadi sect of Islam. The economy depends on oil production, agriculture and fishing.

Life for Christians: Islam is the state religion. The vast majority of Christians in Oman are foreigners. Though religious tolerance is promoted, there are many restrictions on religious freedom. Christians may not meet in private homes for corporate worship or prayer, and they are allowed to worship only in government-approved locations on land provided by the sultan.

VOM Work: VOM supports local evangelists and church planters in their work among Omanis and other Arab nationalities.



PAKISTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 98.9%, Christianity 0.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Mamnoon Hussain

Description: Pakistan was created to provide an independent homeland for Indian Muslims. The country struggles with widespread corruption and Taliban-linked militants.

Life for Christians: Christians in Pakistan are often marginalized. They have few educational opportunities, and many live in poverty. They are beaten, raped, abducted and murdered, but the government rarely investigates or brings their attackers to justice. Suicide bombers have targeted several churches, killing and wounding hundreds. The country's blasphemy laws are used to target Christians, and many have been killed as a result of accusations.

VOM Work: VOM supports Bible distributions, evangelistic outreaches and discipleship programs as well as providing medical, practical and spiritual assistance to imprisoned Christians, families of martyrs and front-line workers.



QATAR

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 87.4%, Christianity 6.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

Description: Qataris are the richest people in the world, thanks to oil and gas revenues. The Thani family has ruled for 150 years, and in 2013 the former emir transferred power to his son.

Life for Christians: Though conversion from Islam is a capital offense, no one has been punished for apostasy. However, Christian converts and Christian migrant workers face constant pressure. The government allowed the construction of "Church City," where thousands of foreign Christians worship. No Christian symbols are allowed in advertising or other areas visible to the public.

VOM Work: VOM provides ministry materials and support for evangelism that reaches throughout the Arabian Peninsula.



SAUDI ARABIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 92.7%, Christianity 4.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: King and Prime Minister Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Description: The birthplace of Islam controls 25 percent of the world's oil reserves. The Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law calls for public beheadings and other harsh punishments.

Life for Christians: Churches are forbidden in the officially Islamic state, and the government prosecutes those charged with apostasy or blasphemy. According to a 2014 law, blasphemy and advocating atheism are acts of terrorism. Known believers are often killed by family members. Internet access is bringing the gospel into the kingdom.

VOM Work: VOM provides ministry materials and support for evangelism that reaches throughout the Arabian Peninsula.



SYRIA

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 90.1%, Christianity 5.9%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Bashar al-Asad

Description: Large swaths of Syrian territory remain in the hands of Islamist rebel groups since the 2011 uprising. More than 4 million refugees have fled the country, and many more remain displaced.

Life for Christians: Syria was once religiously diverse and protective of Christians' rights. But today both Orthodox and evangelical Christians are targets of the Islamists. Christian villages have been overrun, churches destroyed and believers abused or driven out.

VOM Work: VOM is heavily involved both inside and outside the country, providing Bibles, support to churches, blankets, food, water and more.



TURKEY

Hostile

Major Religions: Islam 96.5%, Christianity 0.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Description: This secular republic is now ruled by an Islamic party, and some are concerned by the growing authoritarianism of the prime minister. Turks are proud of their culture and history.

Life for Christians: Turkey remains one of the least evangelized countries in the world. More than a century of missionary work has yielded little fruit. Active Christians face hardships ranging from job loss to physical violence and even death. All religious communities are subject to state controls, which limit the right to own places of worship, train clergy and offer religious instruction.

VOM Work: VOM supports front-line workers who share the gospel throughout Turkey, including the remote eastern frontier. We also provide ministries with tools like Bibles and digital media with Christian resources.



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 87.4%, Christianity 6.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Khalifa bin Zayid Al-Nuhayyan

Description: The seven independent states that form the UAE are some of the most liberal in the Gulf region. The oil industry attracts many foreigners, who make up three quarters of the population.

Life for Christians: Religious choice is tolerated, but conversion from Islam is discouraged. Converts are often persuaded or coerced to return to Islam, or they leave the country. Proselytizing is illegal.

VOM Work: VOM provides ministry materials and support for evangelistic work throughout the Arabian Peninsula.



YEMEN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 99.6%, Christianity 0.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Abd Rabuh Mansur Hadi (in exile)

Description: Poverty-stricken Yemen continues to suffer from an internal conflict that began in 2011. Much of the population lives in fear of violence and lacks access to food and medical care.

Life for Christians: Persecution for Christian converts is intense, coming from family, community and the government. Several known converts were killed last year. It is illegal to proselytize Muslims, and non-Muslims are deeply discriminated against. There are believed to be a few thousand secret believers in the indigenous church.

VOM Work: VOM provides ministry materials and support for evangelism that reaches throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

South & Central Asia





AZERBAIJAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 84.9%, Non-religious 12.3%, Christianity 2.7%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam/Communism

Leader: President Ilham Aliyev

Description: This former Soviet republic has a large Shia Muslim majority, many with ties to Iran. The country is oil-rich, but corruption and authoritarian leadership have held the nation back.

Life for Christians: Church registration is required but almost impossible to obtain for evangelical groups. Raids on “illegal” church meetings are common. Christians who convert from Islam face serious persecution, such as beatings, insults and humiliation from family. In 2015, state officials published a list of banned religious books that included the Old Testament. Those caught with religious literature face fines.

VOM Work: VOM is assisting several pastors who cannot find employment because of their Christian faith. VOM also provided 450 Bibles to believers in area churches who did not have a Bible.



BANGLADESH

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 88.5%, Christianity 0.4%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

Description: Despite industrial growth and economic development, Bangladesh still suffers from poverty and political turmoil. Much of the labor force works in agriculture, manufacturing and energy.

Life for Christians: Although Islam is the official religion in the country, Bangladesh is constitutionally a secular state. The government practices parliamentary democracy mixed with Islamic law. Proselytism is forbidden and has led to the arrest of Christian pastors and evangelists. Widespread poverty has fueled an upsurge in Islamic extremism. Christians, especially evangelists, are routinely harassed, intimidated, robbed, beaten and even killed with little to no government intervention.

VOM Work: VOM supports radio and TV broadcasts and discipleship/training programs designed to equip hundreds of local Christian leaders to plant churches in difficult areas.



BHUTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Buddhism 86.1%, Hinduism 9.7% Christian 0.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Buddhism/Hinduism

Leader: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Description: This remote kingdom has managed to preserve the indigenous Buddhist culture of the Drukpa people. The country’s first constitution was approved in 2008.

Life for Christians: Most Christians in Bhutan meet privately, as public places of worship are usually not available. The constitution protects religious freedom, but without official church registration, religious groups forfeit certain rights such as property ownership. Proselytism is illegal, resulting in imprisonment. Christians and other non-Buddhists are often pressured by the government to observe traditional Drukpa values, though most opposition comes from family and friends.

VOM Work: VOM is distributing the Life of Jesus to 25,000 Bhutanese, as well as supporting the distribution of Bibles in Nepali and other languages.



INDIA

Hostile

Major Religions: Hinduism 80.9%, Islam 12.7%, Christianity 2.2%

Prevalent Ideology: Hinduism

Leader: Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Description: India comprises a great diversity of languages, cultures and religions. It has a strong military and a fast-growing, powerful economy.

Life for Christians: VOM partner organizations report an increase in persecution and scrutiny of Christians in the past year. Several pastors and evangelists have been beaten and killed, while others have been displaced by Hindu militants. Hindu groups that seek to create a purely Hindu India wield considerable influence over the government. Six states have laws against leaving Hinduism for another religion, and some are calling for nationwide anti-conversion laws.

VOM Work: VOM is providing evangelistic training to 1,000 local believers. We also support the families of pastors who have been killed for their faith and provide medical help to those injured in attacks.



KAZAKHSTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 50.1%, Non-religious 27.8%, Christianity 21.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Nursultan Abishuly Nazarbayev

Description: Kazakhstan has vast mineral resources and has seen great economic growth in recent years. Islam has also seen a dramatic revival since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Life for Christians: All religious activity must be registered with the government. Violators are commonly fined for distributing religious texts, discussing religion or holding worship meetings. Some church leaders protest these laws by refusing to pay fines. This has resulted in numerous police raids, confiscation of property, prison sentences and prohibition from travel outside the region.

VOM Work: VOM has helped local Christians by providing a very effective evangelistic tool in their native language.



KYRGYZSTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 87.2%, Christianity 6.1%, Non-religious 5.8%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Almazbek Atambaev

Description: Kyrgyzstan is a Central Asian country with proud nomadic traditions. It has struggled with widespread poverty, corruption and political conflict. Tensions between ethnic groups have sometimes led to violent clashes.

Life for Christians: Although religious freedom is guaranteed, government officials have proposed a number of regulations that could affect these freedoms, particularly for non-Muslims. Christians face widespread persecution, especially when Christians need to bury their dead. Imams often forbid Christian burials, encouraging crowds to attack Christians and even dig up bodies of buried Christians.

VOM Work: VOM has helped several Kyrgyz pastors to start a small business so they can better provide for their families.



MALDIVES

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 98.7%, Christianity 0.0%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam

Leader: President Abdulla Yameen

Description: The Maldives is an Islamic republic whose economy thrives on tourism, though many Maldivians live in poverty. There are fears that if sea levels continue to rise, some islands could disappear.

Life for Christians: Islam is the official religion of the country, and all citizens must practice Sunni Islam. There is no provision for freedom of religion, and non-Muslims may not become citizens. The law prohibits disrupting religious unity. Violators can be fined or imprisoned, and foreigners can also be deported.

VOM Work: VOM is using creative methods to share the gospel with the people of the Maldives.



NEPAL

Hostile

Major Religions: Hinduism 82.3%, Christianity 0.9%

Prevalent Ideology: Hinduism/Militant Marxism

Leader: Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli

Description: Following years of deliberation, Nepal has recently adopted a new constitution. An earthquake in April 2015 killed thousands, and many are still rebuilding their lives.

Life for Christians: Christians frequently face attacks by Hindu extremists, and those found guilty of violating religious conversion laws face fines or prison sentences. Churches are often targeted by radical groups. Christian converts from Hinduism are beaten, forced out of their homes and sometimes prevented from using public areas like wells. Many Nepalis are very poor, and Christians often have difficulty affording a Bible of their own.

VOM Work: VOM distributes Christian tracts as well as MP3 players loaded with gospel presentations, music and Bible stories.



SRI LANKA

Hostile

Major Religions: Buddhist 52.1%, Christianity 2.0%

Prevalent Ideology: Buddhism

Leader: President Maithripala Sirisena

Description: This former British colony off the southern coast of India experienced decades of war, which ended in 2009. Sri Lanka has since embarked on ambitious economic development projects.

Life for Christians: It is legal to convert to Christianity in Sri Lanka, but Christians often face opposition from politically active Buddhist monks. The government tacitly supports the majority Buddhists and does not provide adequate protection for Christians. Dozens of attacks on churches and against Christians are reported. Unregistered churches have been closed, including 30 in 2014.

VOM Work: VOM provides training for front-line workers and supports the printing and distribution of Bibles and other Christian resources in Sinhalese.



TAJIKISTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 95.5%, Christian 1.3%

Prevalent Ideology: Islam/Communism

Leader: President Emomali Rahmon

Description: Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet states and still suffers from the effects of a civil war in the 1990s. A third of the population is under age 14.

Life for Christians: Most of the country's 150,000 Christians are Russian Orthodox, but there are also Baptists, Catholics, Lutherans and Korean Protestants. The government must approve the production, importation, export, sale and distribution of all religious materials. Religious groups must be registered, and unregistered religious activity is a crime. It is illegal and difficult for Christian parents to provide a biblical education for their children.

VOM Work: VOM helps several widows and also provides local churches with tools and materials for evangelism.



TURKMENISTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 94.9%, Christianity 3.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Authoritarian/Communism/Islam

Leader: President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow

Description: Turkmenistan sells its top export, natural gas, to China, Iran and Russia. Its "President for Life" died in 2006, and the current leader was elected after highly criticized elections.

Life for Christians: Turkmenistan is one of the most closed former Soviet republics. Unregistered religious activity and worship in homes are forbidden, and religious education is greatly restricted. Police frequently raid and harass unregistered churches, while new laws have increased the penalties for illegal religious activities.

VOM Work: VOM provides Bibles and other Christian literature to believers.



UZBEKISTAN

Restricted

Major Religions: Islam 82.8%, Non-religious 14.6%, Christianity 2.1%

Prevalent Ideology: Authoritarian/Islam/Communism

Leader: President Islom Karimov

Description: Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian country and has the largest military. The country's political system is highly authoritarian and its use of torture is "systematic."

Life for Christians: Christians are branded as "extremists" by the government, and they face massive fines, detention, and arrest for "illegal religious activity." Unregistered religious meetings are raided. State-controlled media encourages prejudices against minority religious groups.

VOM Work: VOM is helping local believers reach more people for Christ by providing them with Bibles, outreach tools and training.





The Voice of the Martyrs' Five Main Purposes

1. To encourage and empower Christians to fulfill the Great Commission in areas of the world where they are persecuted for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. To provide practical relief and spiritual support to the families of Christian martyrs.
3. To equip persecuted Christians to love and win to Christ those who are opposed to the gospel in their part of the world.
4. To undertake projects of encouragement, helping believers rebuild their lives and Christian witness in countries where they have formerly suffered oppression.
5. To promote the fellowship of all believers by informing the world of the faith and courage of persecuted Christians, thereby inspiring believers to a deeper level of commitment to Christ and involvement in His Great Commission.



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