



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Significant Rise in Christian Persecution Worldwide

"Let us pray for the many Christians in the world who still suffer persecution and violence. May God grant them the courage of fidelity." Pope Francis

More than 340 million Christians across the globe live in perpetual fear that they will be punished, harmed or even killed for merely practicing their faith. The annual World Watch List 2021 from Christian charity Open Doors showed this is a huge increase over previous years; the 2019 figure was about 260 million. Every day, 13 Christians worldwide are killed for their faith; 12 churches or Christian buildings are attacked; 12 Christians are unjustly imprisoned and another 5 are abducted.

Open Doors identified three main trends driving the increase:

"Covid-19 acted as a catalyst for religious persecution through relief discrimination, forced conversion, and as justification for increasing surveillance and censorship."

"Extremist attacks opportunistically spread further throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, from Nigeria to Mali and beyond."

"Chinese censorship systems continue to propagate and spread to emerging surveillance states."⁽¹⁾

"My heart breaks when I hear of believers in India and Vietnam being refused food and told 'let your God feed you.' Or when I hear of women like a Christian mother-of-three from Egypt who was kidnapped by the Muslim Brotherhood and forced to declare she had 'converted' in a video," said Open Doors CEO, Henrietta Blyth.⁽²⁾

"The pandemic has legitimized increased surveillance by totalitarian governments, with China leading the way. And nationalism driven by religious identity is increasing in countries such as India and Turkey."⁽³⁾

"It is tragic and unacceptable that this happen to anyone, whatever their faith or none. Christians will only be freed from persecution when freedom of religion and belief is guaranteed for all." ⁽¹⁾

(christianitytoday.com, 1/3/21(1); christian.org.uk, 1/15/21(2)(3); 1cbn.com, 2/16/20; persecution.org, 4/28/21; lifesitenews.com, 4/12/21)

Let us Pray: Lord, the plight of our brothers & sisters is deep and the suffering of Christians is severe and frightening. Therefore, we ask you Lord to spare their lives, to grant them patience & courage to continue their witness of Christian values with trust and hope. Grant us the peace and stability that will enable us to live with each other without fear and anxiety, with dignity and joy. Amen

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Catholics For Freedom of Religion

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