



WORLD WATCH LIST 2023

What you need to know from the 30th edition

The World Watch List, which was created in 1993, was intended for Open Doors' internal use. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, the need to smuggle Bibles into Eastern Europe disappeared. Because of the extra resources, Open Doors leadership appointed someone to research working in other countries where Christians are persecuted.

Since then, the list has become crucial in Open Doors' work with persecuted Christians as it helps inform how and where we support persecuted Christians worldwide. It has become a trusted source to help raise awareness, prayer and support for our persecuted family of faith.

Today, more than 360m Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. In the top 50 countries of the WWL alone, 312m Christians face very high or extreme levels. Worldwide that is 1 in 7 Christians.



▶ Watch how the global persecution of Christians has evolved from 1993-2023:



Scan to watch the video.



Did you know?

- North Korea, Somalia, and Afghanistan have appeared most often in the top 10 over the last 30 years.
- Islamic extremism has been the main persecution trend over the last 30 years, with Islamic oppression having grown and become more violent.
- Authoritarianism has also been a significant persecution trend over the last 30 years as governments try to consolidate power at the cost of people's freedom.

SQUEEZE VS SMASH persecution

Most persecution is often very subtle and experienced through the daily pressures of private, family, community, national and church life (squeeze).

It's still startling to see the violence (smash) Christians endured in the reporting period.



2023 WWL VIOLENCE STATISTICS

- 5 621** Christians killed
- 2 110** Churches attacked
- 4 542** Christians detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned
- 5 259** Christians abducted
- 2 126** Christians raped or sexually assaulted
- 717** Christians forcefully married off
- 29 411** Christians physically or mentally abused
- 6 757** Christian houses, other properties, shops or businesses attacked
- 139 307** Christians forced to leave their homes, countries or go into hiding

LATEST PERSECUTION TRENDS

Violence in Sub-Saharan Africa reaches new heights

Weak nations and inept governments have exacerbated several violent trends that endanger the Church. It's fertile ground for jihadism, which has given military juntas a reason to overthrow governments in some countries. Meanwhile, Christians have fled to displacement camps or other countries due to jihadists who aspire to spread Sharia law across the continent.

China's model gains a growing number of emulators

China is forging international alliances to redefine human rights globally, with China's economic progress appealing to many world leaders who, regardless of ideology, are drawn to China's promise of growth and prosperity while controlling deviant groups and individuals. Many regimes that emulate China detest Christians, especially Christian activists who challenge their control over citizens.

China's digital control threatens the Church

Digital tools, along with the Chinese government, have advanced. Beijing adopted extensive new internet rules for churches in March 2022, using the Covid-19 pandemic for censorship, disinformation, and surveillance to control religious groups. The online space tightened for the average Chinese citizen, especially Christian citizens, who are seen as Western allies.



What about Afghanistan?

Although Afghanistan has dropped from #1 to #9 and violence has declined, persecution remains at an extreme level, with converts living deeper underground, making it challenging to obtain verified violence data.



THANK YOU for reading the WWL, praying through it and acting on it. Open Doors' vision is that no Christian suffers persecution alone. Your prayers and support will continue this vision.