

IDOP 2023

5 AND 12 NOVEMBER

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DESTROYED

PRAYER GUIDES

ORGANISED BY THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE, THE IDOP IS AN ANNUAL, GLOBAL EVENT THAT UNITES CHRISTIANS IN PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH | WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

2023 IDOP

As we observe the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP) for 2023, our hearts are heavy with the rising tide of Christian persecution worldwide. From Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and beyond, over 360 million Christians now live in places where they face high levels of persecution, equating to one in seven Christians globally.

The statistics for Christian persecution are distressing. According to the World Watch List, 5,621 Christians were killed, over 2,100 churches were attacked, and more than 4,500 Christians were detained for their faith in 2022. These staggering numbers highlight the harsh reality that many believers endure daily – harassment, discrimination, wrongful imprisonment, and even death for their devotion to Christ.

However, as we gather in prayer for our persecuted brethren, we find hope and strength in the Scriptures. Paul, writing to the church in Corinth 2 says that “...we are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” This powerful biblical text reminds us that though persecution may strike believers down, it does not destroy their faith. The resilience and unwavering trust in God displayed by our persecuted brothers and sisters serve as a testament to the enduring power of Christ in their lives. This verse encourages us to pray with empathy and fervency, knowing that in Christ, the persecuted find the strength to stand firm and persevere despite the adversities they face. It strengthens our resolve to lift them up in prayer, seeking God's protection, comfort, and strength, and affirming our unity as one body in Christ across the globe.

Through the IDOP, we bring global attention to the plight of our persecuted brothers and sisters. In places where they share our faith, they do not always share our freedoms, as 80 percent of religious persecution worldwide targets Christians. For over two decades, the IDOP has united millions of Christians in prayer for the persecuted. We recognize that their most urgent and basic need is for prayer. Hebrews 13:3 commands us to pray for those who are mistreated, understanding that their pain is our pain, and we are one in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:26).

This November, the World Evangelical Alliance calls upon the global church to join the IDOP in an expression of solidarity. Let us lift up our persecuted brethren, praying that the Holy Spirit would empower them to stand firm in their faith, obedient to Christ even amidst hardships. Furthermore, let us commit to supporting those on the frontlines of persecution, as they advance God's Kingdom in the face of adversity. As noted by Spurgeon, prayer brings inner strength to God's warriors and sends them forth to spiritual battle with their muscles firm and their armor in place. In the same manner, may our prayers and support be a source of strength to the persecuted, knowing that the global church stands united in solidarity, bound together by our shared faith in Jesus Christ!

In prayerful fellowship,

Godfrey Yogarajah
Ambassador for Religious Freedom
World Evangelical Alliance

GLOBAL STATE OF PERSECUTION

Christian persecution remains a grave concern affecting millions of believers across the globe. According to the World Watch List by Open Doors, **currently, over 360 million Christians face discrimination and persecution for their faith, with 312 million Christians encountering very high or extreme levels of oppression.**

According to the WWL, 5621 Christians were killed; over 2100 churches attacked and over 4500 Christians were detained for their faith in 2022.

During the year, **Sub-Saharan Africa** witnessed escalating violence against Christians from Jihadist movements, forcing believers into displacement and vulnerability. Moreover, there was also a notable trend of regulation and surveillance of religious groups, which affected Christians in **Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Malaysia**. Christians in India were subject to increased violence and harassment. In the **Middle East**, the church continues to suffer from discrimination, oppression, and economic decline, resulting in a shrinking Christian community. **Latin America** also experienced deterioration in conditions for the Church, with countries like Nicaragua, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico witnessing increased persecution driven by corrupt governments and emerging criminal and ethnic groups.

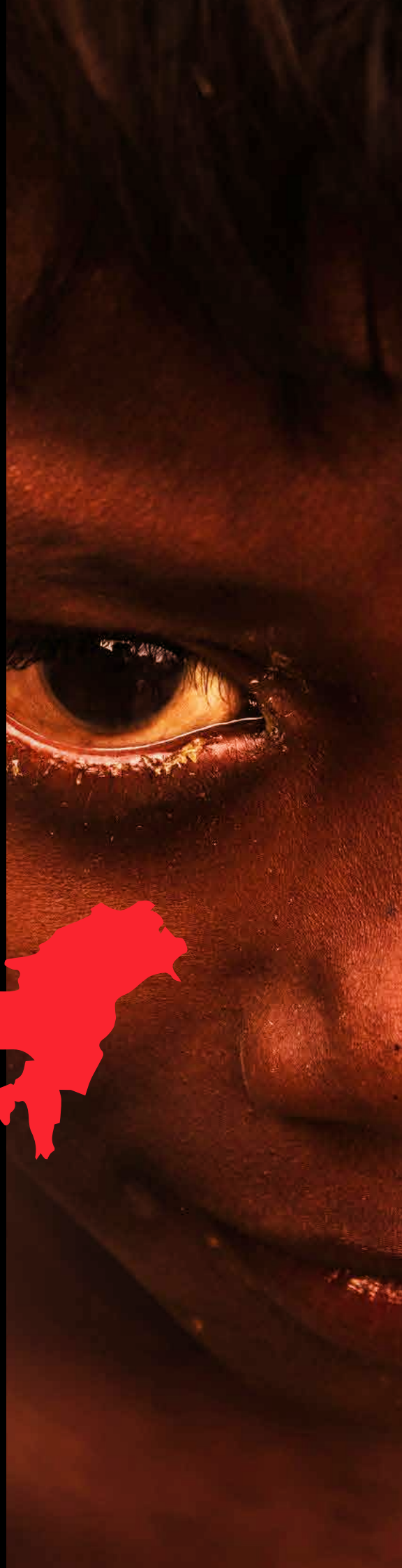
PRAYER POINTS:

- ★ Pray for the safety and strength of persecuted Christians worldwide. Ask God to grant them courage and resilience in the face of adversity.
- ★ Pray for governments in persecuted countries to uphold religious freedom and protect the rights of Christians and other religious minorities. Pray for policy changes that promote tolerance and respect for diverse beliefs.
- ★ Pray for the families of those who have lost loved ones due to persecution. Ask God to provide them with comfort and support during their times of grief.
- ★ Pray for the hearts of those who perpetrate violence and discrimination against Christians. Ask God to bring transformation and change their hearts towards love and understanding.
- ★ Pray for a spirit of unity among Christians worldwide to stand in support of their persecuted brethren. Pray for increased awareness and advocacy efforts to address Christian persecution and protect religious freedoms for all.

INDIA

India, with a population of over 1.3 billion people, is a religiously diverse country with a majority of Hindus. Christians, along with other religious minorities such as Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains, make up a small percentage of the population. However, the Protestant Christian community in India has faced significant challenges to their religious freedom.

Over the past year, there has been an intensification of anti-Christian violence in India. For instance, in Manipur, violence erupted between two ethnic groups—the Kuki tribe and the Meitei community—where the latter has a predominantly Hindu majority. The tensions escalated due to disputes over forest land, which had been the ancestral home of the Christian minority tribes for generations. Protests against their eviction from these lands were met with violence, leading to devastating consequences for the Christian community.



As of May 2023, the situation had taken a grim turn, resulting in at least 70 Christians being killed, and the destruction of around 250 churches and hundreds of other Christian buildings. The Christian community bore the brunt of the persecution, with many facing extreme pressure to renounce their faith and embrace Hinduism.

Christian homes, and even a theological seminary was among the properties destroyed. Faced with the unimaginable violence, over 15,000 people, including many Christians from different ethnicities, were forced to flee their homes and find refuge in camps protected by the army. However, the situation remains dire as the area is still inaccessible, and essential items like food and resources are scarce and costly.

The plight of the affected believers is heart-wrenching. They have been left uncertain about their future, deprived of basic facilities and amenities, and deeply traumatized by the violence they have witnessed. The fear of further attacks looms large, as Hindu extremists from the Meitei group exploit the conflict to target church leaders and force entire Christian communities to convert to Hinduism.

PRAYER POINTS:

- ★ Pray for the authorities to bring all perpetrators to justice and for the truth to be revealed about the incidents of violence. Let justice prevail for the innocent victims.
- ★ Pray for greater protection and freedom for Christians in Manipur and across India, both locally and nationally. Pray against the oppression they face from extremist groups.
- ★ Pray for reconciliation and peace between different ethnic and religious groups in Manipur. May God's love and understanding prevail over hatred and animosity.
- ★ Pray for the affected believers in Manipur to find strength in their faith, trusting in God's presence amidst their trials. May they stand firm in their belief and find hope in His promises. Let believers worldwide stand in prayerful support with them during this challenging time.



MYANMAR

Myanmar, with an estimated population of around 54 million people, is a diverse nation with a majority of Buddhists. Religious minorities in Myanmar include Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and others. Despite the diversity, the Christian community in Myanmar has faced challenges, particularly in regions affected by conflict and violence.

Persecution in Myanmar has intensified since the military took control in February 2021, with the Christian minority bearing the brunt of attacks. As fighting escalates across the country, Christians have become internally displaced people and refugees, facing dire conditions in camps and churches without sufficient food and healthcare. Unlike the Buddhist majority, Christians do not enjoy equal rights and legal protection, often falling victim to violent attacks with impunity.

Persecution takes various forms, including government forces targeting Christian villages and churches while leaving Buddhist monasteries untouched. Converts to Christianity face rejection and isolation from their Buddhist, Muslim, or tribal families and communities, and are denied access to essential resources such as water.

Christian communities in majority Christian states like Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Kayah are particularly vulnerable due to the ongoing civil war between ethnic armed groups and the military. Converts from other religious backgrounds, especially those living among the Rohingya Muslim community, also face intense pressure to abandon their Christian faith.

PRAYER POINTS:

- ★ Pray for reconciliation between religious groups in Myanmar, that the habitual discrimination against Christians may end, and that there may be harmony and understanding among different faith communities.
- ★ Pray for the protection and safety of thousands of vulnerable Christians who are now refugees or internally displaced due to the ongoing conflict. Ask for God's provision of their basic needs and for their physical and emotional well-being.



- ★ Pray for the cessation of violence and the establishment of peace in Myanmar, particularly in areas where Christians are facing the brunt of attacks.
- ★ Pray for the safety and courage of Christian aid workers, pastors, and leaders who are serving in high-risk areas and facing direct threats to their lives. Ask God to grant them wisdom and discernment as they navigate the challenges of ministering in areas of persecution and conflict. May they be strengthened in their faith and be a source of hope and support to the persecuted communities they serve.
- ★ Pray for the government of Myanmar to become more inclusive of ethnic and religious minorities, including Christians, and to uphold their rights and dignity as citizens of the country. May policies be enacted that protect and promote religious freedom for all.



ALGERIA

Persecution of the Protestant Christian community in Algeria has been on the rise, with increasing violations of the right to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). Despite the country's constitution guaranteeing freedom of worship without discrimination, the authorities have systematically targeted churches and individuals, resulting in severe restrictions and discriminatory practices.

Algeria, with an estimated population of 43 million people, is predominantly Sunni Muslim, with only a small percentage of Christians, Jews, and other religious minorities. However, the authorities have targeted the Protestant Christian community through a series of church closures and sealings. At least 16 Protestant churches affiliated with the Église Protestante d'Algérie (EPA) have been forcibly sealed, and four others have been ordered to close. Additionally, several non-affiliated Protestant churches face the same threat of closure. The authorities claim these churches lack the necessary permits to hold non-Muslim worship, but the required licenses are practically unattainable.



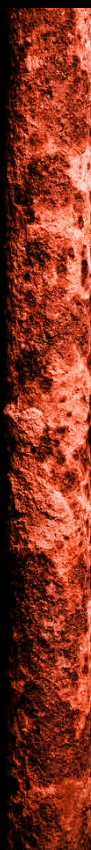
Individual Christians have also faced increased targeting and prosecution in criminal courts on charges related to FoRB, including blasphemy, proselytizing, and holding worship without a license. Many Christians have been sentenced to imprisonment and fines, and their right to practice their faith has been severely curtailed.

The EPA, the umbrella organization for most Protestant churches in Algeria, has faced significant obstacles in obtaining official recognition. Despite meeting the requirements for re-registration under new legislation, the EPA's application has been pending for years, leaving the organization without legal status and vulnerable to further attacks from the authorities.

PRAYER POINTS:

- ★ Pray for the safety and endurance of the Protestant Christian community in Algeria. May they find strength in their faith and continue to worship and serve God despite the challenges they face.
- ★ Pray for church leaders and pastors who have been targeted for their faith. Ask God to grant them wisdom, courage, and a steadfast spirit as they lead their congregations amidst persecution.

- ★ Pray for a change of heart among the Algerian authorities, that they may uphold the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of worship for all citizens, including religious minorities. Pray for a fair and just legal system that respects and protects the rights of all Algerians.
- ★ Pray for international organizations and governments advocating for FoRB in Algeria. May their efforts be effective in raising awareness and pressuring the Algerian government to address these violations.
- ★ Pray for a favorable response from the Algerian authorities to the EPA's application for re-registration. Pray for unity and strength among member churches of the EPA as they navigate the challenges posed by the government's pressure.



NEAR EAST

In Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria, Christians have faced significant pressure that has forced many of them to leave their ancestral homes. The complexities of the region's political and social landscape have resulted in a challenging environment for religious minorities, including Christians.

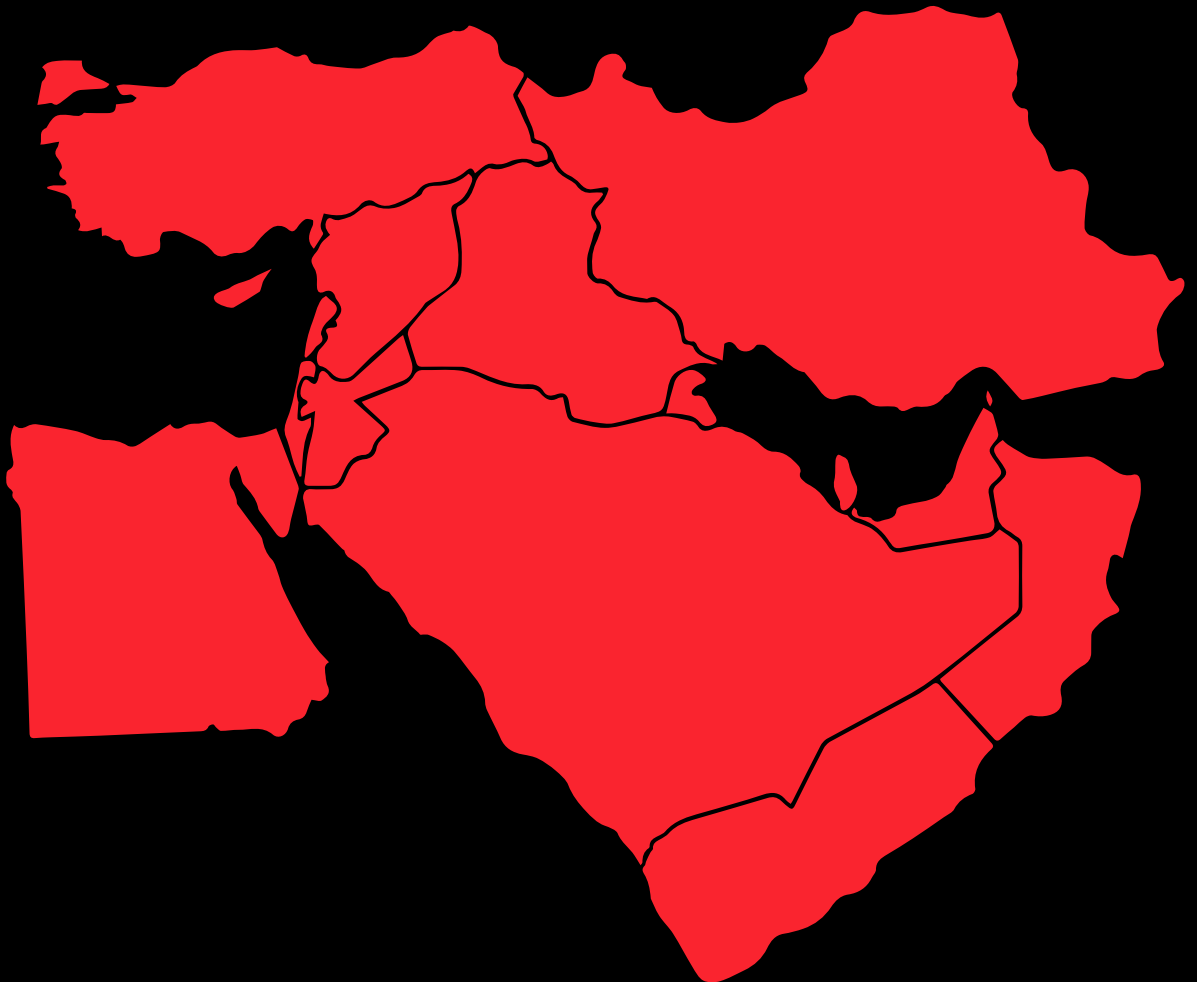
In Lebanon, where Muslims make up the majority, Christians have historically coexisted with their Muslim neighbors. However, the rise of Islamic extremist groups in certain regions has created a hostile climate for Christians. The fear of persecution and the uncertain future have driven some Christians to seek safety in other countries, leaving behind their communities and heritage.

In Palestine, Christians constitute a small minority within the predominantly Muslim population. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has added to their challenges, with some facing discrimination and restrictions on their religious practices.

Economic hardships and limited opportunities have also pushed some Christians to emigrate in search of a more stable and secure life elsewhere.

Jordan, known for its religious diversity and tolerance, has provided a relatively safer environment for Christians compared to some neighboring countries. However, increasing regional instability has put pressure on the Christian community, leading to emigration in search of better opportunities and safety.

Syria, once home to a significant Christian population, has been devastated by a prolonged civil war. Christians have faced persecution from various armed groups, adding to the complexities of the conflict. Many Christians have been internally displaced or forced to flee the country altogether, seeking refuge in neighboring countries and beyond.





PRAYER POINTS:

- ★ Pray for the safety and protection of Christians in the Near East, particularly in Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria. May they find strength and courage in the face of persecution and displacement.
- ★ Lift up the Christian communities in these countries, that they may experience God's peace and hope amidst the challenges they are facing. Pray that they may remain steadfast in their faith and be a light in the midst of darkness.
- ★ Pray for the governments and leaders of Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria, that they may prioritize the protection of religious minorities and promote an environment of tolerance and coexistence.
- ★ Pray for the Christian refugees who have been forced to leave their homes and seek safety elsewhere. Ask for God's provision and comfort as they rebuild their lives in unfamiliar lands.
- ★ Pray for reconciliation and lasting peace in the region, especially in Syria, where the conflict has caused immense suffering and displacement. Pray for an end to violence and a path towards healing and restoration for all those affected.

