



Do you know our suffering?

2 Timothy 3:10–12

LIBYA

Population: Approx. 7.5 million.

Capital: Tripoli

Form of government: Split. The Government of National Unity (GNU) governs from Tripoli; an eastern administration, backed by the House of Representatives and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), governs much of the rest.

Head of state: Presidential Council under Mohamed al-Menfi, but this is contested.

Religions: Muslims 99%, Christians 0.5%, Buddhists 0.4%, all others 0.1%

Gina A. Zurlo, ed. World Christian Database (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed August 2026).

Still waiting for peace and unity

Fifteen years on from Gaddafi's fall, Libya still lacks a functioning central government. Two rival authorities hold different parts of the country, each propped up by armed groups and by foreign backers with their own reasons for being there. What that costs ordinary Libyans shows up in the arrests made without warrant, in the torture, in the killings, and in how seldom anyone is called to answer for any of it.

Everyone lives with the insecurity. Religious minorities live with something sharper. Libya's Christians, most of them foreign workers, keep their worship behind closed doors. Preach in public or hand out Christian literature and you risk arrest, a spell in detention, or deportation.

A constitution that does not protect freedom of religion

The country is still governed by its interim constitution, the 2011 Constitutional Declaration. It makes Islam the religion of the state, allows non-Muslims to perform their own rites, and pledges to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms.

That is the text. In practice individuals can be arrested and imprisoned for insulting Islam, or for leaving it. International monitors now place Libya on the shortlist of the worst countries in the world for religious freedom.

Extremist influence and weak rule of law

Where the state is weak, other powers fill the gap. Armed groups and extremist Islamist networks have grown accordingly, most visibly in the east. Reports indicate that some of these groups exert influence over mosques and shape what is taught inside them. Arrests and detentions without due process or accountability are also taking place in some areas. Upon closer examination, links also appear between some influential figures and human trafficking and detention networks.

For Christians, converts, non-religious Libyans and minority Muslims such as Sufis and Ibadis, the weakness of the rule of law can increase the risk of pressure, discrimination, or persecution.

Persecution of Christians and other minorities

In 2015, Christians around the world were horrified by a video of the brutal massacre of 21 Christians by Islamic extremists on a beach in Libya. Libya is not generally a country of annual sectarian massacres. The pressure there is more subtle, sometimes manifesting itself through the courts, legal and social restrictions, and incidents of violence.

In April 2025 a court sentenced 11 Christians to prison terms of between three and 15 years, on charges that included insulting Islam and insulting religious sanctities. Some of them had been arrested two years earlier, in 2023, on charges of converting to Christianity and speaking about their faith with others. According to reports, attempts were made to force several of them to renounce Christianity under torture.

Christians are not the only ones under pressure. Salafi militants in the east have destroyed or damaged Sufi shrines, and Ibadis and Libyans of no religion meet discrimination of their own.

So church life happens out of sight. Meeting openly is dangerous.

Family, communities, and education

Schools and curricula are heavily influenced by the prevailing religious and cultural environment in the country, while other religions and non-religious views are largely absent. Children of minority groups often experience this discrimination through social and cultural pressures, rather than through any written law. Furthermore, there is no clear and adequate legal protection for those who choose to leave Islam or change their religious beliefs.

Women, family law, and religious discrimination

Family law follows the principles of Islamic Sharia, and its provisions vary from person to person. Marriage, divorce, inheritance, and nationality differ. A Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim man, while a Muslim man enjoys greater freedom in this area.

A Libyan woman married to a foreigner may find she cannot pass her nationality to her own children, affecting their legal identity and access to basic services.

There is hope!

Despite restrictions and persecution, the Church in Libya continues to grow. Through personal witness, social media, and the faithful sharing of the gospel, more Libyans are encountering Christ. Believers often meet quietly and discreetly to study God's Word, encourage one another, and pray together.

The two rival authorities recently signed a United-Nations backed peace agreement. They agreed to hold national elections within 24 months. Libyans have renewed hope for greater unity, stability, and respect for human rights.

WE PRAY

- For the Christians of Libya, especially new converts and those imprisoned, may God protect and strengthen them.
- For church leaders who make decisions that may endanger lives, may God guide them with wisdom and safety.
- For everyone still carrying what was done to them in torture, detention, and trafficking, and for those who have lost loved ones. That kind of healing takes far longer than the headlines suggest.
- That a movement toward Jesus grows among Libyans, among migrants passing through, and among the country's other minorities.
- For an end to the division, and for a government stable enough to enforce the rule of law and protect the rights of all citizens.
- That some of those preaching hatred and violence in the name of religion have a genuine change of heart and choose the path of peace and reconciliation.
- For Libyans living abroad, that they meet Christ where they are and carry that hope back to their families at home.
- That the new peace agreement brings unity, and all Libyans may live in safety and dignity, with their fundamental rights and freedoms respected.