

DAY OF PRAYER

FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Join us in praying for our
persecuted brothers and
sisters around the world.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2023

imb.org/persecuted



**INTERNATIONAL
MISSION BOARD**

1

PERSECUTION IS ON THE RISE

More than 360 million Christians worldwide suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith. That's a staggering 1 in 7 believers. According to the ministry Open Doors, that raises awareness and support of the worldwide persecuted church, the number of countries where Christians suffer high and extreme levels of persecution has almost doubled in the last 30 years.

2

WHAT IS **PERSECUTION?**

Persecution takes many forms and often looks different in various contexts throughout the world. Believers might be separated from their families or ostracized by their communities. They may face discrimination in the workplace or education system. They could lose jobs or become the targets of extremists. They might have to flee their homes, or even face imprisonment, torture, or death.

3

WHY PRAY FOR **PERSECUTED** BELIEVERS?

The world's greatest problem – lostness – is growing every day. As believers, we have the solution to that problem – the gospel. When we pray for persecuted believers, God uses their witness to inspire gospel transformation among the lost.

NORTHERN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Northern Africa and the Middle East is home to significant populations of the world's major religions – Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It's a place of extravagant wealth and extreme poverty. More refugees come from this region than any other place in the world.

The Afar people group lives in Northern Africa. Along the coast some make their living as fishermen, but a majority are pastoral nomads who raise herds of sheep, cattle, goats, and camels in the lowland deserts. The majority religion among them is Islam.

In recent months, persecution has broken out against Afar believers. This persecution comes through mob violence, calls for violence on social media, and attacks from their own nonbelieving family members. Often, the result has been the emboldened witness of believers filled with the Spirit, but not always. Some believers have had to flee for safety.

IMPACTING THE WORLD

with you

WE PRAY

PRAY FOR SPIRIT-GIVEN BOLDNESS for all Afar believers and wisdom in handling difficult situations.

ASK GOD TO increase their faith and trust in Him as He proves Himself faithful to His children.

PRAY EPHESIANS 6:10-11 over Afar believers: "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil."

AMERICAS

Most people in the Americas identify as Catholic but have not heard the gospel. They know the name of Jesus but think of Him as one among many saints. Fewer than 1 in 10 people in the Americas have a personal relationship with Jesus.

Open Doors reports that persecution has seen a sharp increase in Latin America over the past year. A report explains, "Corrupt and ineffective governments, particularly in the rural areas of Mexico and Colombia, have created space for criminal groups and ethnic leaders to grow in influence and become drivers of persecution."

IMB missionaries are seeking prayer for Mark, a young believer in Bogota, Colombia, who lives in a shelter for displaced people with his family. Mark has an opportunity to be salt and light to the 1,500 other displaced people living in the overcrowded building – but he will likely face persecution for doing so.

IMPACTING THE WORLD

with you

WE PRAY

PRAY FOR THOSE AFFECTED by government hostility to be strengthened in their relationship with Jesus.

ASK GOD TO WORK in the hearts of those in power, so that they will see the value and worth of Christians.

PRAY ACTS 4:29 over persecuted believers in the Americas: "Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness."

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa is more than 2.3 times the size of the United States. The region is home to the youngest population in the world – 63% are under the age of 25. About 1 out of every 3 displaced people in the world lives on the continent.

Most Ngoni people in Tanzania are Catholic. If a Ngoni person chooses to follow Jesus and leaves the Roman Catholic church, he or she will often be threatened with separation from family and the community.

A small number of Digo believers on the coast of eastern Africa are facing similar circumstances. Now unwelcome in their biological families, they must find ways to stand together and seek community within the Church.

IMPACTING THE WORLD

with you

WE PRAY

PRAY FOR UNITY AND PEACE among believers who are forced out of their families because of their beliefs.

ASK GOD TO PROVIDE for their spiritual and physical needs as they follow Jesus and grow in their faith.

PRAY 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 for this group of persecuted believers: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."

CENTRAL ASIA

Nearly 400 million Central Asians comprise 386 people groups, among whom Islam is the predominant religion. Most Central Asian believers are first generation Christians. Few have known Jesus for more than 30 years. Many Central Asians are experiencing deep grief and suffering as a result of war, repressive laws, and natural disasters.

Peter and Eden are Iranians who have been living in Turkey while seeking asylum. Their story in their homeland is one of persecution, much like many of their people who have professed faith.

Peter and Eden have been serving their community while waiting more than seven years for any forward progress in their case. Local authorities have followed them and told them that if they cease sharing their faith, caring for, and loving others, then their asylum case could move forward.

IMPACTING THE WORLD

with you

WE PRAY

PRAY FOR WISDOM AND COURAGE for persecuted believers who face ultimatums like Peter and Eden.

ASK GOD TO USE their testimony and provide opportunities for them to share the gospel with their neighbors.

PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BELIEVERS to recall James 1:2-4: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

ASIA-PACIFIC RIM

Roughly 2.3 billion people, 3,358 people groups, live in the Asia-Pacific Rim. People who are non-religious account for 27% of the population, ethnic religions for 25%, Buddhists for 21%, and Muslims for 11%.

One country in this region takes the top spot on Open Doors' World Watchlist 2023, a list of countries with reported persecution of Christians. In North Korea, believers face hostile and often brutal persecution.

"If discovered, they are either sent to atrocious labor camps or executed – and their families will share a similar fate. Christians have no freedom and it's almost impossible for believers to gather ... Christians are viewed as enemies of both the leadership and society," the report says.

IMPACTING THE WORLD

with you

WE PRAY

PRAY PERSECUTED BELIEVERS will not be discouraged but emboldened by the Holy Spirit.

PRAY THAT THEY WILL cling to God's Word, seek Him in steadfast prayer, and stand firm in Him.

ASK GOD TO REMIND persecuted believers of Romans 8:37-39: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."



INTERNATIONAL
MISSION BOARD

THANK YOU

FOR JOINING US IN PRAYER FOR THE
PERSECUTED CHURCH.

INFORMATION FROM OPEN DOORS CAN BE FOUND AT [OPENDOORSUS.ORG.](https://opendoorsus.org)