

idopp 2022

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER
FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

STAND FIRM

6TH AND 13TH NOVEMBER 2022

COUNTRIES IN FOCUS

PRAYER GUIDES

IDOP 2022

STAND FIRM

From Nigeria, India, and Algeria to Afghanistan, Christian persecution is on the rise world over. Today, more than 360 million Christians live in places where they face high levels of persecution. This is one in seven Christians worldwide.

In many parts of the world, every day, Christians are harassed, discriminated against, wrongfully imprisoned, and even killed because of their faith. According to the World Watch List for Christian persecution, over 5000 people were killed in 2021 because of their faith in Jesus. This is a staggering number.



The Bible tells us that everyone who desires to live a godly life will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). However, this is not the complete story. In the Bible, Jesus says that: “In this world, you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Persecution, therefore, is not a defeat for the believer!

Through the IDOP, we bring global attention to the plight of our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ. In most places in the world, while they share our faith, they

do not always share our freedoms. In fact, according to the International Human Rights Society, 80 percent of all religious persecution worldwide is against Christians. However, as much as the IDOP is an occasion to pray for the persecuted, it is also an opportunity to encourage and support our persecuted brethren.

For over two decades, the IDOP has united millions of Christians in prayer for the persecuted. While our persecuted brothers and sisters have many needs, their most urgent and basic request is for prayer. In Hebrews 13:3, the Bible commands Christians to pray for those mistreated, as they themselves were mistreated. In other words, the Bible tells us to pray for the persecuted with empathy and in a spirit of oneness. After all, if one member of the body suffers, we all suffer (1 Corinthians 12:26).

This November, the World Evangelical Alliance calls upon the global church to join the IDOP as an expression of solidarity with those suffering for their faith in Jesus. Their suffering is immense. Let's unite in prayer that the Holy Spirit would enable them to stand firm in their faith and be obedient to Christ, even as they serve Him through many hardships. At the same time, while we remember them in prayer, let's also commit to, where possible, support our brothers and sisters who serve on the frontlines of persecution to advance God's Kingdom around the world.

In prayerful fellowship,

Bp Dr Thomas Schirrmacher
Secretary General
World Evangelical Alliance

INDIA

Around 2 percent of India 1.2 billion population are Christians. Hindu extremist groups such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) regularly incite discrimination and violence against Christian pastors and churches on accusations of forced conversions. According to church groups, an average of 350 violent incidents against Christians or their property were documented between 2017 and 2021. In 2021, violence against Christians was up 74 percent from the previous year. While India's constitution provides for religious freedom, anti-conversion laws introduced at the state level have severely impaired the rights of Christians and fueled violence against churches and church leaders. Presently, 11 states have introduced anti-conversion laws. In 2021, the state of Madhya Pradesh amended its anti-conversion law to include prison sentences of up to 10 years for persons found guilty of leading "illegal conversions."

Prayer points:

- Pray for God's protection over Christian pastors and their families.
- Pray for God's wisdom over church leaders as they continue to minister the gospel in hostile contexts.
- Pray that anti-conversion laws would be repealed or amended in line with acceptable international norms of human rights.
- Pray that the authorities would end the climate of impunity and take action against extremist groups harassing Christians.



ALGERIA

Approximately 99 percent of Algeria's 43 million population are Sunni Muslims. It is estimated that there are around 135,000 Christians in the country. According to Algeria's constitution, Islam is the State religion. Despite some legal provisions that provide for religious freedoms, Christian churches have faced systematic discrimination at the hands of the State. This has included the widespread issue of church closures. Since January 2018, citing that they lack official permits, the authorities have forcibly sealed at least 16 Protestant churches and ordered several other churches to close.

According to church leaders, the National Commission for Non-Muslim Religious Groups, which issues licenses to churches, have not issued a single permit to a church since 2006. Church leaders have also faced increased challenges in the form of prosecution on charges related to blasphemy, proselytising and conducting worship activities. According to church groups, at least a dozen Christians remain imprisoned in Algeria on such charges.

Prayer points:

- Pray that the State would ensure greater religious freedoms for all.
- Pray that the authorities would allow all forcibly closed churches to re-open.
- Pray that the authorities would discontinue their campaign of discrimination against Christian churches.
- Pray for the overturning of convictions recorded against Christians on faith-related charges against extremist groups harassing Christians.

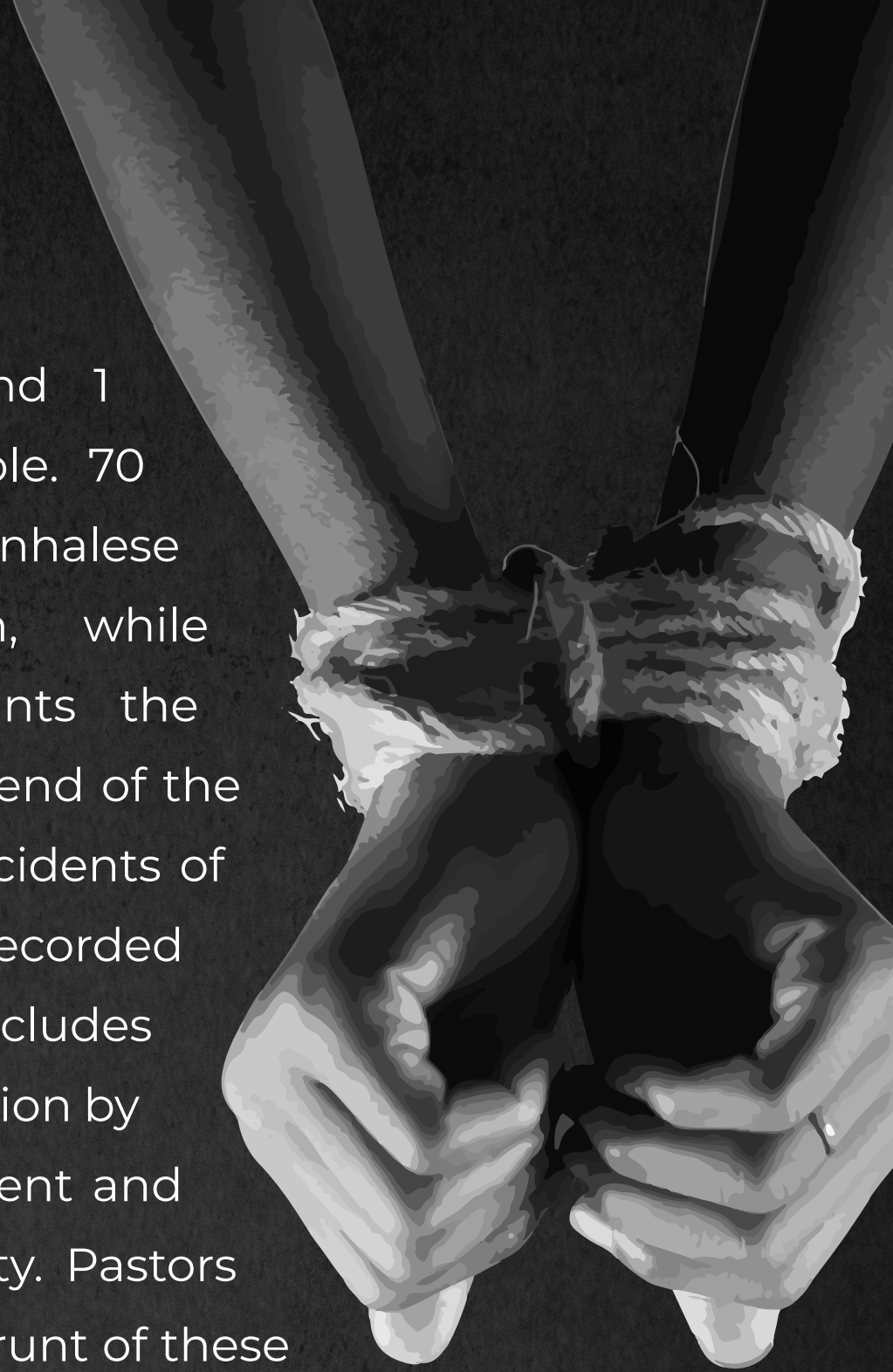


SRI LANKA

Protestant Christians comprise around 1 percent of Sri Lanka's 21 million people. 70 percent of the population are Sinhalese Buddhists. Sri Lanka's constitution, while providing for religious freedom, grants the foremost place to Buddhism. Since the end of the country's civil war in 2009, over 1000 incidents of religious freedom violations have been recorded against the Christian community. This includes incidents of discrimination and intimidation by state officials and instances of harassment and violence by members of the community. Pastors and their families continue to face the brunt of these issues. Despite there being no legal basis for registration, Christian churches, particularly in rural areas, are forced by the authorities to register their places of worship or discontinue their worship activities. According to church groups, State actors were identified as either active or passive perpetrators in 67 percent of the religious freedom violations recorded over the past two years.

Prayer points:

- Pray for greater protections for Christian pastors and their families serving in rural areas in the country.
- Pray that State actors would not discriminate against Christians.
- Pray that restrictive regulations on mandatory registration of places of worship would be revoked.
- Pray that churches would continue to stand firm and minister the gospel despite the challenges they face.



AFGHANISTAN

Approximately 90 percent of Afghanistan's population comprise Sunni Muslims, while around 9 percent adhere to Shiite Islam. Even though the exact number is unknown, it is estimated that there are a few thousand Christians in the country. As an Islamic nation, any deviation from Islam is forbidden by law and tradition. For instance, according to the country's Islamic law, conversion or apostasy is a crime punishable by death. Following the Taliban's takeover of the country in 2021, many Christians have left or are attempting to leave the country. Those who remain continue to face severe threats to their security. Female converts are often forcibly married to a Muslim or confined to their homes. They also face physical and mental abuse from their families. Christian men face imprisonment, torture, and the threat of death. According to the World Watch List (WWL) for 2022, Afghanistan is the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian.

Prayer points:

- Pray for God's protection over Christians in the country.
- Pray that God would encourage the country's secret believers to stand firm in their faith.
- Pray for greater democratic rule and increased protections for human rights in Afghanistan.
- Pray that God would touch and turn the hearts of those persecuting Christians in the country.



