



Healing in our world

As we come to pray for our world we will focus our prayers around lifting up our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith right now.

Open Doors is an organisation that originated in 1955, when a young Dutchman started smuggling Bibles to the persecuted church in Communist Europe. He became known as Brother Andrew, and his work led to more than six decades of support for the persecuted church. Open Doors works in over 60 countries, supplying Bibles, training church leaders, providing practical support and emergency relief, and supporting Christians who suffer for their faith.

The World Watch List is Open Doors' annual ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. It's a unique, in-depth record of the places where Christians are following Jesus no matter the cost.



WORLD WATCH LIST 2021

2021 rankings

1	North Korea	11	Iran	31	Bangladesh
2	Afghanistan	12	Syria	32	Burkina Faso
3	Somalia	13	Sudan	33	Tajikistan
4	Libya	14	Saudi Arabia	34	Nepal
5	Pakistan	15	Maldives	35	Central African Republic
6	Eritrea	16	Egypt	36	Ethiopia
7	Yemen	17	China	37	Mexico
8	Iran	18	Myanmar	38	Jordan
9	Nigeria	19	Vietnam	39	Brunei
10	India	20	Mauritania	40	Democratic Republic of the Congo
		21	Uzbekistan	41	Kazakhstan
		22	Laos	42	Cameroon
		23	Turkmenistan	43	Bhutan
		24	Algeria	44	Oman
		25	Turkey	45	Mozambique
		26	Tunisia	46	Malaysia
		27	Morocco	47	Indonesia
		28	Mali	48	Kuwait
		29	Qatar	49	Kenya
		30	Colombia	50	Comoros

Levels of persecution:

- Extreme
- Very High
- High

In the west we are so blessed to be able to openly talk of our faith, share the good news of Jesus with others, pray and declare ourselves as a Christian. We are also able to gather for worship and despite our buildings having to be closed over this last year to protect everyone from COVID 19, we have still been able to fellowship together in different ways and openly share that the church is still alive!

Other countries around the world do not have this luxury and the latest figures show that 4,761 Christian were killed for faith related reasons last year.

This may seem overwhelming and knowing how we can pray can be difficult but here are some areas to help you focus your prayers...

Persecution continues to rise...

For the first time since Open Doors started compiling the World Watch List, all top 50 countries score at least 'very high' levels of persecution. Twelve countries are categorised as having 'extreme' levels of persecution, up from 11 the year before. And there are another 24 countries scoring 'very high' or 'high' levels of persecution that don't even make it into the top 50.

Covid-19 is used as a weapon by persecutors...

Open Doors research reveals the extent to which Christians are being specifically excluded from receiving Covid-19 aid. Incidents have been recorded across Asia and Africa where vulnerable believers are deliberately neglected by local authorities when food is distributed, Christian nurses are denied vital PPE, and some Christians are even blamed for the spread of the virus.

Violence against Christians rises dramatically in sub-Saharan Africa...

Of the top six countries where Christians experience the most outright violence, five are in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria – which re-entered the top 10 for the first time since 2015 – saw the most violence against Christians in 2020.

Authoritarian governments increase surveillance and restrictions...

Increasingly, countries are using modern surveillance methods to monitor citizens for their own 'protection' and 'security.' In China (up to 17 from 23) a mix of new laws and increased surveillance have propelled it back into the top 20 for the first time in a decade.

Religious nationalism continues to fuel persecution...

Since the 2016 attempted coup against President Erdogan, Turkey (25) has pursued a much more open Islamist and nationalist agenda. Increasing violence and intolerance directed towards Christian minorities sees it rise 11 places. In India (10), rising Hindu nationalism continues to claim that 'to be Indian is to be Hindu'.

Above all, the World Watch List shows that the church around the world is active and alive.

Persecution is rising, but that only happens where the church is actively sharing the gospel and living it out.

Take a moment now to ask ourselves the following questions and honestly answer them, asking God to help us where we realise we need to be more courageous in our faith.

- How does this challenge you in your own faith journey?
- Is God calling you to be more open about your own faith?
- Is there someone who God is calling you to share your faith story with?
- Let us be encouraged by the bravery of our brothers and sisters around the world who are sacrificing so much (even their lives) to follow Jesus.

Canon Andrew White (the Vicar of Baghdad – Iraq is ranked 11th on the World Watch List) is quoted as saying:

“We need prayer for protection; we need prayer for perseverance, so we can keep going; we need prayer for provision, so we can provide for the needs of the people; and we need prayer for peace: Four Ps for peace: Protection, Perseverance, Provision and Peace.”

So let's pray:

Father God, may our Sisters and Brothers in persecuted countries know protection. Protection from those who seek to do harm. Protection from the ravages of life where being treated as second (or third) class citizens means poor health care, or food provision. May they also know your protection from losing heart, from giving up and giving in to despair.

Lord, give them the strength we hope we would have if we were persecuted, to continue loving, trusting and serving. May they persevere in their faith, put their trust in you, stand their ground, and after they have done everything, stand (*Ephesians 6:13*).

Father, where persecution results in the withholding of food and other vital supplies, would you raise up people able and willing to provide for their needs.

And above all loving heavenly father, may they know peace. Peace from conflict and persecution. Peace to sleep at night without fear and peace to go out in the day free from anxiety. And may they know the peace of God, which passes all understanding, that it will guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (*Philippians 4:7*)

Amen

