

The number of Christians who worship in house churches is unknown but is estimated to be in the tens of millions.

Half of World's Population in Persecution Hotspots (5)

Close to 4 billion people are living in countries where the most intense violations of religious freedom are occurring, a new report warns. The Religious Freedom in the World Report 2021, compiled by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), lists 26 countries in the most severe category, comprising just over half (51 percent) of the world's population. Twelve of these countries are in Africa, including Nigeria, where long-running conflicts over natural resources and ethnic divisions have been made worse by climate change, growing poverty, and attacks by armed criminal gangs. Other countries on the "red" list include China and Myanmar, where there has been international outcry over possible genocides of the Rohingya and Uyghurs.

Globally, religious freedom is being violated in almost a third (30 percent) of the world's countries, with a significant increase in severity over the last year. Of particular concern are large jihadist networks like the so-called Islamic State and al-Qaeda spreading across the Equator that "aspire to be transcontinental caliphates."

"A crescent of jihadist violence stretches from Mali to Mozambique in sub-Saharan Africa, to the Comoros in the Indian Ocean,

and to the Philippines in the South China Sea," ACN said.

At the same time, a "cyber-caliphate" is expanding globally, with extremist groups attracting new recruits from the West online. "Islamist terrorists employ sophisticated digital technologies to recruit, radicalize, and attack. Counter-terrorism units, although not able to neutralize the online terrorist communications, were nonetheless able to foil attacks in several Western countries," the report reads. Extremist groups are not the only ones utilizing digital technologies, as countries like China step up their use of AI-enhanced surveillance to monitor the movements of Christians.

In the past year, a new form of persecution has emerged with religious minorities being blamed for the pandemic in China, Niger, Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan. Christians have also found themselves being excluded from food distributions and medical aid. There has been a "groundswell" of religious nationalism, the report continues, with authoritarian governments becoming more oppressive. Elsewhere, the report raises concerns that the disappearance of religious education classes in Western schools will undermine efforts to combat radicalism.

"Even though governments recognize that teaching world religions in schools reduces radicalization, and increases interreligious understanding among young people, a growing number of countries have discontinued religious education classes," the report states.

significant news for christians

Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing. Read with discernment. Watch and pray.

THE Church Around the WORLD

August 2021



Country in Focus: Vietnam (1)

Vietnam is a long, narrow country occupying the entire eastern and southern coastline of Indochina. Decades of war in the country have been followed by years of Marxist economics. The loss of Soviet-bloc financial backing left the economy in shambles. Reforms begun in 1986 have modernized the economy and led to the emergence of a young middle class. A huge gap remains

between the prosperity of the urban population and the extreme poverty of the rural areas.

Vietnam gained independence from France in 1954, but then faced three decades of war until reunification of the north and south under the Communist party in 1975. The Communist party retains supreme control, and while they continue to repress all religion, social ills such as drug addiction, prostitution, and the exploitation of children are on the rise. The constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion is greatly diminished by a vast Bureau of Religious Affairs and religious police bureaucracies. While a growing, witnessing church is emerging after years of persecution, and the number of Bibles in all languages is increasing, Christians still make up less than 10 percent of the population.

Prayer concerns:

- Pray for increased witness to the rural poor, the Hmong minority, and the ethnic Vietnamese.
- Pray for Christian radio programs to be able to reach isolated groups of people, despite the government's attempt to jam the radio signals.
- Pray that the Vietnamese diaspora, which includes those who fled the Communist regime and those who have more recently left to seek out work, will be reached through outreach and witness.

God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:6

Customer service and subscription number: 1-800-692-9912. James Kraus, publisher; Deborah King, associate editor. © 2021 The Church Around the World, vol. 51, no. 8, August 2021. The Church Around the World is published monthly by Tyndale House Ministries, 351 Executive Dr., Carol Stream, IL 60188. Printed in the USA. The Church Around the World is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Ministries, Subscription \$16.00 per month per 100 copies. Canada: \$18.00 per 100 per month. Scripture quotations from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Ministries, Carol Stream, IL 60188. All rights reserved. Sources: christianheadlines.com, assistnews.net, charismanews.com, onenewsnow.com, relevantmagazine.com, religionnews.com, worldmag.com, worldwatchmonitor.org, and wwrn.org. All images © Unsplash. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Church Around the World, Subscription Services, P.O. Box 405, Mt. Morris, IL 61054.

Nashville-Area Church Experiences Revival (2)

A revival that began in December at a Nashville-area church has now lasted several months, with more than 1,000 baptisms

and many people coming to Christ. The congregation, Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee, experienced a movement of God during a baptism service on December 20, when about a dozen people were scheduled to be baptized, but

dozens more followed through with baptism that day.

In December, Pastor Robby Gallaty called the revival a “movement of God that I’ve never experienced.” Sunday services that once flowed like clockwork now include a few more interruptions, including baptisms during songs. The altar at the front of the church is always open, and baptisms take place for as long as 45 minutes after the service.

The revival began after Gallaty became introspective following the deaths of two close friends who committed suicide.

“Both of those men preached at Long Hollow within six months of their passing,” Gallaty told Baptist Press. “They both sat at my dining room table. It made me realize

that the last person to say he’s burning out or that ministry is tough is usually the one burning out. The Lord allowed me to take an introspective look at my own life. I was tired. Tired of trying to keep people happy. Tired of trying to keep them from leaving. I went to my porch to pray for the Lord to fix the problems in our church and our country. God showed me that the problem . . . was me.”

Gallaty began praying more and listening to God more.

“I really believe that if all of us, as pastors, begin to press in and seek the Lord in prayer, calling out for God to move in our churches, that’s a prayer he’s going to answer,” Gallaty said. “The greatest hindrance to a move of the Holy Spirit is formality and structure. If God wanted to break into our services today,



Church Around
the WORLD

we’d have no time for him. At Long Hollow we still have a plan, but we’re okay if God interrupts the service.”

Ugandan Mother Stabbed for Becoming Christian (3)

A mother of seven children in eastern Uganda suffered serious wounds and was cut off from her family after her husband and other Muslim relatives attacked her for putting her faith in Christ.

Salimati Naibira lost consciousness after her husband cut her with a dagger as she attended a worship service for the first time, she said. She had converted from Islam to Christianity three days prior. Naibira said she was on her way to the church service when she met her brother-in-law, Ahirafu Kowa, who asked her where she was going. One hour into the worship service, Naibira saw through a window that her husband and other relatives were approaching.

The Muslim relatives entered the church building with sticks and knives. Naibira said the pastor and some church elders tried to protect her but were overpowered, and the assailants forced her into a van and drove her to a nearby forest. “They started beating me with sticks, then my husband cut me,” she said. “I regained consciousness only after several hours.”

A passing herdsman found her lying in a

pool of blood, and he and others took the still unconscious Naibira to a nearby clinic. Naibira said she does not see how she can gain custody of her children, who range in age from 4 to 17 years old. She said she cannot return home.

“I hope my children are safe,” she said.

China Seeking to Stamp Out House Churches (4)

China is launching a new campaign to rid the country of “illegal social organizations,” a category that includes house churches. Churches in China are required to register with the government and join either the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (for Protestants) or the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association. But because such churches face severe restrictions—including limits on what pastors can say and a ban on attendance by children—millions of Christians worship in underground house churches, meeting in homes or other buildings.



This month you can . . . Fill Boxes for Operation Christmas Child

One of the few living centenarians has just filled his thousandth box for Operation Christmas Child, an organization run by Samaritan’s Purse. “I hope the children are blessed and realize that God looks after them and that there’s still hope for them,” Ira Miller, 104, said. “The Lord has blessed me, and I still want to do something for the children who don’t know the Lord,” he shared. “I return all my thanks to Him.”

Miller, with the help of his daughter Debbie Welch, completed this 1,000-box feat in just four years.

Even though he had been filling Operation Christmas Child boxes for years, Miller began packing many more the day he turned 100. As a celebration, Miller decided he wanted to fill 100 boxes for children in need around the world. Miller has continued packing even more boxes every year since then, now turning them out to the tune of 333 a year or almost 1 per day.

Miller’s granddaughter, Leah Hansen, also commented on Miller’s charitable spirit, telling Samaritan’s Purse, “My grandfather has a love for others and has put his heart into packing these shoeboxes. . . . My children, through watching him, are realizing that these aren’t just toys, but each item has been prayed over and will hopefully help the child who receives it.”

Miller views his shoebox gifts as a chance to be a missionary for the Lord. He said that the boxes give children an opportunity to hear about the Lord in places all across the globe. “These 100 boxes are going to 100 children around the world, and they’re going to hear about Jesus,” Welch said. “I just focus on giving God glory for his faithfulness.”

For more information on how you can get involved in Operation Christmas Child, visit Samaritan’s Purse at www.samaritanspurse.org.