

**News and Current Events :: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS****WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:34**

SOURCES: INFORMATION FOR THE COUNTRY SUMMARIES CAME FROM OPERATION WORLD, VOM REPORTS, THE WORLD FACTBOOK, and OTHER SOURCES

Afghanistan

Afghanistan is plagued by criminality, insecurity and the recently elected government's inability to control all parts of the country. One of its most serious challenges is the growing, illegal opium trade. In the last year, the Taliban have been burning schools, forcing 226 to close.

Religion: Muslim 97.89%, Christian 0.02%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Hamid Karzai

Persecution: Anyone who acknowledges faith in Christ experiences intense persecution, including death. Persecution normally comes from family members and neighbors, while police and government officials turn a blind eye. The world's attention was drawn back to Afghanistan summer 2007, when 23 South Korean Christians on a humanitarian mission trip were kidnapped by the Taliban.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:36**Algeria**

Algeria has suffered from both internal and external war for nearly half a century. Ethnic minority Berbers have long been agitating for autonomy. Also, the activities of extremist militants continue, though they have abated somewhat.

Religion: Muslim 96.68%, Christian 0.29%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Abdelaziz Bouteflika

Persecution: Since a revival in 1988, more than 70,000 Algerians have converted to Christianity. A second anti-conversion law restricting Christian evangelism was implemented in June 2007. The move is intended to put the first law, passed March 2006, into practice. Those found guilty of "shaking the faith" of a Muslim face punishment of two to five years in prison and a maximum fine of about \$12,000 U.S. The same punishment is applied to anyone publishing or keeping literature and/or audio-video materials that threaten the Islamic faith. Through this law, an era of relative liberty to practice Christian faith ended.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:38**Azerbaijan**

Azerbaijan is a former republic of the USSR, which gained independence in 1991. After independence, the country faced internal coups and war with Armenia. The majority of the population lives in poverty.

Religion: Muslim 83.67%, Christian 4.63%

Ideological Influence: Islam/Communism

Head of State: President Ilham Aliyev

Persecution: Most of Azerbaijan's towns and villages have never been evangelized. Zaur Balaev, a Baptist pastor in a remote area of Azerbaijan, was arrested and charged with "resisting government representatives." He was sentenced to a two-year prison term in August 2007. The head of the Baptist Union said the region where Zaur was detained is "a place where officials insult our believers, won't allow them to gain legal status and deny birth certificates to their children." There has been a push by the government and state-controlled media for the Azeri people to return to their "ancestral faith," Islam.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:40

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is consistently plagued by frequent floods and cyclones that cause billions of dollars worth of damage and the tragic loss of many lives, making deep poverty and social unrest commonplace. Islamic extremism is on the rise in this nation of 150 million.

Religion: Muslim 85.63%, Christian 0.72%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Iajuddin Ahmed

Persecution: In July 2007, Muslim villagers attacked and severely beat 41 former Muslim converts. The next day, the Christians were given 24 hours to get out of the village or face further beatings and the destruction of their homes. Police who were to protect the Christians for three months left after only a week. The believers were also banned from using the village well, a common form of ostracism. Churches have been growing at twice the population rate during the past 40 years. However, poverty, illiteracy and lack of trained and godly leadership have led to shallowness of faith and nominalism.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:41

Belarus

Belarus became an independent state in 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The failure to change Soviet economic structures has stimulated inflation, hindered foreign investment and crippled economic development.

Religion: Christian 78.70%, non-Religious/other 21.30%

Ideological Influence: Communism (remaining influence)

Head of State: President Aleksandr Lukashenko

Persecution: Pastor Antoni Bokun became the third person to receive a prison sentence for religious activity in post-Soviet Belarus. In response to Bokun's second arrest, the imminent deportation of a Polish Pentecostal and other harassment of religious communities, 7,000 Christians attended a religious freedom prayer service on June 3, 2007. Apparently due to heightened state sensitivity towards unauthorized gatherings during the March 2006 presidential election period, Reformed Baptist pastor Georgi Vyazovsky and religious freedom lawyer Sergei Shavtsov were given 10-day sentences for organizing unsanctioned religious events. A repressive religious law, in effect since 2002, bans all unregistered religious activity, communities with fewer than 20 members and any religious activity in private homes (apart from occasional, small-scale meetings). All religious literature is subject to censorship.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:43

Bhutan

Bhutan was isolated from the outside world until the communist takeover of China in 1949. Its isolationist policies further reinforce the hold of Tantric Buddhism. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck abdicated his throne in December 2006, handing the reign of the Buddhist kingdom to his 26-year-old son, Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. Democratic elections of a new National Assembly are scheduled for 2008.

Religion: Buddhist 72.04%, Hindu 23%, Christian 0.46%.

Ideological Influence: Buddhism/Hinduism

Head of State: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Persecution: All public worship and evangelism by non-Buddhists is illegal in Bhutan. When Bhutanese are discovered to have converted to Christianity, they are denied government benefits—including education and employment. They face subtle forms of discrimination. In 2007, a Christian who contracted a serious disease while a government medical worker was denied medical treatment.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:44

Brunei

Brunei is one of the richest states in Asia. Oil is the sole source of wealth, but its reserves are predicted to be used up by the year 2020. It has been ruled by the same family for more than six centuries.

Religion: Muslim 64.39%, Christian 11.25%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Sultan and Prime Minister Sir Hassanal Bolkiah

Persecution: Constitutional guarantees allowing free practice of religion are steadily eroding. Christian leaders were expelled in 1991. The following year Christian literature was banned, and the celebration of Christmas outlawed. Conversion to Christianity is restricted, since it is illegal to evangelize Muslims. Muslims want a "pure" Islamic state by 2020. There are three registered churches, but many applications for registration are ignored; therefore, believers must meet secretly.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:46

Chiapas

Chiapas (Mexico) is a Southern state of Mexico where Christians are persecuted, particularly in smaller communities.

Religion: Statistics unavailable for this region

Ideological Influence: Mixture of pagan, revolutionary and liberation theology

Head of State: President Felipe Calderon

Persecution: In San Juan Chamula, seven evangelical pastors were arrested during a church dedication in July 2007. They were charged with holding an unauthorized service. The traditionalist Catholics then destroyed the church. Earlier, a mob in the same town lynched a 20-year-old evangelical. The man was tortured. His hands were tied then he was hung.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:47

China

China was declared the People's Republic of China in 1949 by Chairman Mao Zedong, who quickly sought to purge society of anything that would point to religion. In recent years, living standards have improved in urban areas while little has changed in the countryside, promoting discontent. Political controls remain tight. Rural areas have not seen any economic prosperity; a lot remains unchanged, promoting discontent. The human rights record in China is one of the worst in the world. Its system of "re-education through labor" detains hundreds of thousands each year in work camps without even a court hearing.

Religion: Non-Religious/Other 49.58%, Chinese 28.50%, Christian 7.25%

Ideological Influence: Communism

Head of State: Hu Jintao

Persecution: The year 2007 marks the 200th year of Protestant mission work in China. Again in 2007, church property and Bibles were confiscated. Christians were harassed, questioned, arrested and imprisoned. More Christians are in prison or under detention in China than in any other country. The house church movement (unregistered churches), which comprises approximately 90 percent of China's Christians, endures unimaginable persecution, yet stands on its commitment to preach the gospel, no matter the cost. A major crackdown against unregistered church groups continued in 2007. Beijing house church activist Hua Huiqi was released after serving six months imprisonment, while many other house church leaders remain in detention. Christians in prison are routinely beaten and abused.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:49

Colombia

Colombia, especially in the east, is plagued by Marxist guerrilla groups, which are known for assassinations and kidnappings. Colombia is considered one of the world's most violent countries.

Religion: Christian 95.45%, Non-Religious 2.72%

Ideological Influence: Marxist terrorism

Head of State: President Alvaro Uribe Velez

Persecution: In the last five years, the Marxist guerrilla group FARC (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia) has killed more than 300 evangelicals and displaced hundreds more. Guerrillas persecute Catholics and Protestants, seeing Christians as a threat to new recruitment. Their violent acts are funded by illegal drugs. In July 2007, FARC soldiers pulled two pastors from their homes and shot them in the region of Huila. Ongoing death threats against the pastors' widows forced them into hiding. Despite the fear and intimidation, the church is growing. Aggressive evangelistic outreaches have resulted in an increase in churches.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:49

Comoro Islands

Comoros has seen 19 attempted coups since 1975. A new constitution was adopted in 2001, and in May 2006, an Iran-trained Sunni Muslim cleric, Ahmed Abdallah Sambi, was elected president.

Religion: Muslim 98.07%, Christian 0.84%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Ahmed Abdallah Sambi

Persecution: Persecution against Christians generally takes the form of social discrimination. In June 2006, four men were sentenced to prison for their faith. Police beat them and tried to get them to renounce Christianity. There are no official Comoran churches.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 0:51

Cuba

Cuba stands as one of the last "champions" of communism. In 1959, Fidel Castro came to power threatening Cubans with socialism or death. In the last two years, President Castro's health has appeared to decline. Observers hope a change in leadership might bring greater societal openness.

Religion: Christian 46.88%, Non-Religious/Other 35.47%

Ideological Influence: Communism

Head of State: President Fidel Castro; due to health problems, Castro handed provisional control of the government over to his brother, Raul Castro, on July 31, 2006.

Persecution: In the 1960s, Castro labeled Catholics and Protestants "social scum" and forced lay people and clergy into labor camps under inhumane conditions. Cuba's constitution was amended in 1992 to guarantee freedom of religion. Yet, today Christians are still imprisoned and churches destroyed. Strict regulations against house churches went into effect in September 2005, prohibiting a church from being located within a mile and a quarter of another of the same denomination and restricting meetings to three per week. On December 22, 2006, a court in Havana found the Reverend Carlos Lamelas not guilty of "trafficking in human beings" as previously charged, but convicted him on unannounced charges of falsification of documents. A co-defendant in the case, evangelical pastor Joel Rojas of Holgu n, was convicted of "human trafficking" (helping Cubans flee the country) and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:04

Egypt

Egypt was predominantly Christian in the first centuries after Christ. In 969 A.D., the country was conquered by Islam, but thankfully Egypt's Coptic Christian Church never disappeared.

Religion: Muslim 86.52%, Christian 12.98%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Mohammed Hosni Mubarak

Persecution: The country's constitution gives preference to Muslims. Christians are treated as second-class citizens, denied political representation and discriminated against in employment.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:05

Eritrea

Eritrea is dominated by war and drought. The Eritrean Marxist government ordered all independent Protestant churches to close in May 2002, declaring only a few religions were legal.

Religion: Muslim 47.97%, Christian 47.43%

Ideological Influence: Military dictatorship/Communism

Head of State: President Isaias Afworki

Persecution: Magos Solomon Semere, 30, died in military prison in February 2007, four and a half years after he was imprisoned for worshipping at a banned Protestant church. He died from relentless physical torture and lack of treatment for pneumonia. He was the third Christian killed within a year. There are at least 2,000 Eritrean Christians now under arrest without trial or legal charges, solely for their religious beliefs. Under the totalitarian regime of President Isaias Afworki, religious repression has escalated further in the past two years.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:06

Ethiopia

Ethiopia experienced a revolution in 1974 which imposed a Marxist-like government. The regime persecuted Christians and allowed the Islamic movement to grow strong. Since this iron-fisted reign ended in 1991, there has been great freedom to worship and evangelize. Recently, however, Muslims have started massive campaigns to Islamize Ethiopia by penetrating Christian areas with bribes and mosque-building programs.

Religion: Christian 65.02%, Muslim 31%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Girma Woldegiorgis

Persecution: Evangelist Taddese Tefera Akufo was beaten to death by militant Muslims in Jimma on March 26, 2007. Akufu and two female co-workers were evangelizing on Merkato Street when a mob of Muslims emerged from a mosque. The two women were able to flee, but the militants dragged Taddese inside the building and beat him to death. The killing was apparently a direct attack against a local evangelism campaign. In April 2007, Muslims bombed a tent where a group of Christians was gathered in Jijiga, a town in Eastern Ethiopia. Two Christians were killed and several were injured in the bombing. The Christians were meeting together to mourn two Christians killed by rebels on April 24.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:07

Gaza and the West Bank

Gaza and the West Bank were occupied by Israel in 1967. The Islamic terrorist group Hamas won democratic elections in Gaza and the West Bank in late January 2006. Repeated efforts to form a unified government with the Fatah organization led by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have failed.

Religion: Muslim 98.7%, Christian 0.7%, Jewish 0.6%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas

Persecution: There are about 2,000 Arab evangelical Christians in 30 churches. Political turmoil has created an environment where it is easy for militant Islamic groups to persecute Christians. Many Christians left following the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip. According to the Christian Broadcasting Network, in the city of Arad, Messianic Jews face persecution from some ultra-Orthodox Jews. The Messianic Jews ask for prayer for their persecutors, not that persecution will stop, but that it brings glory to God. Christian leader and bookstore owner Rami Ayyad, 30, was kidnapped and murdered in Gaza on October 6, 2007. Christians feel the murder was religiously motivated. Rami is survived by his pregnant wife and two children.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:09

India

India has staggering racial, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. Pressing problems include border disputes, overpopulation, poverty and economic and religious strife. India elected its first female president in July 2007, Pratibha Patil.

Religion: Hindu 79.83%, Muslim 12.50%, Christian 2.40%

Ideological Influence: Hinduism

Head of State: President Pratibha Patil

Persecution: In the past, persecution was confined to specific regions of India. It has now spread to nearly every part, as radical Hindus seek to purify India of all religions except Hinduism. In 2007 there was an average of three attacks per day against Christians. Pastors have been killed; wives and daughters harassed and raped. Many Christians have been beaten or subjected to other acts of violence. At press time, four Indian states had anti-conversion laws. They impose prison terms and hefty fines against anyone who converts Indians by force, fraud or allurements. However, many Indian believers rejoice in their suffering; they see it as a way to testify to Christ's victory in their lives.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:10

Indonesia

Indonesia is a collection of 18,306 islands; 6,000 are inhabited. The government forces people to carry an identification card that includes their religious status. The government promotes a belief called "Pancasila" which means all may freely choose to follow Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Hinduism, but in reality, Muslims receive preferential treatment.

Religion: Muslim 80.30%, Christian 16.00%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

Persecution: Forty-one Indonesian believers were in prison at press time. They were charged under Indonesia's religion abuse laws. Fundamentalist Muslims obtained a video of a prayer meeting where these believers held a copy of the Koran and prayed for Muslims. The Muslims perceived it as blasphemous. All 41 Christians received five-year prison sentences. During the last 40 years, evangelicals have grown from 1.3 million to 11.5 million. The increase of Christian persecution has brought about a greater unity among the Body of Christ, the growth of a national prayer movement and a commitment to outreach in Indonesia and beyond.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:11

Iran

Iran's state religion is Shi'a Islam, and the followers of all other faiths are treated severely. The government has specifically taken an increasing anti-Western and anti-Christian stand. Iran has been called the world's number one producer of terrorism.

Religion: Muslim 99.02%, Christian 0.33%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei

Persecution: In 2007, the government organized a highly-coordinated crackdown that included the arrest and interrogation of Christians, along with the confiscation of thousands of Bibles. Pastors are forbidden to preach in Farsi (the official language) and can only use the Armenian language. Mission organizations are not allowed to enter Iran. Open witnessing to Muslims is banned, and the government sends spies to monitor Christian groups. Believers are discriminated against in education, employment and property ownership. Muslims who leave Islam can receive the death penalty. After decades of existing under government oppression, Iranians are hungry for spiritual meaning, as well as freedom from their oppressive government. Christian programs broadcast by satellite have received very positive responses. Hundreds of callers ask for more information about Christianity or pray with a counselor to receive Christ. House church leaders are nearly overwhelmed caring for these new believers. Careful attention is being given to training Christians into mature believers and integrating them into a fellowship.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:12

Iraq

Iraq has experienced a troubled history since Bible times. U.S. military operations have both helped and hindered Iraqi Christians. Fighting between Muslim factions has directed attention away from Christians for the time being. There are around 70 evangelical congregations in Iraq, but conversions are doing little more than replacing emigrating Christians.

Religion: Muslim 96.85%, Christian 1.55%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Jalal Talabani

Persecution: Iraq is a complex mix of severe persecution and a place of increased freedom for believers and evangelism. Since 2003 there has been a mass exodus of Christians from Iraq. Many of those who stay behind have been kidnapped. Amidst the chaos of a country being rebuilt with ongoing conflict, many churches have succumbed to threats and a spirit of fear by closing the doors in 2007. The few churches that remain recognized the potential for division and have begun meeting to encourage each other. One church reports of an outreach ministry to Muslims that began when one person came asking about Christianity. Muslim converts now tell others about the ministry.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:14

Kuwait

Kuwait has Sunni Islam as the state religion. Kuwait has a diverse Christian community and a relatively liberal Islamic regime.

Religion: Muslim 87.43%, Christian 8.17%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Amir Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah

Persecution: Only Muslims may become citizens. Foreign Christians have the freedom to live and work in Kuwait, but worship must be in a physical location within their own Christian community. Evangelism to Kuwaitis is forbidden. Kuwaitis who convert to Christianity publicly face harassment and arrest. The government discourages Christianity by providing financial incentives for Muslims and has even purchased and burned large quantities of Bibles.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:14

Laos

Laos was taken over by the communist Pathet Lao in 1975. Lao established a socialist government with close ties to Vietnam. Since 1986, the country has moved toward greater private enterprise and free trade.

Religion: Buddhist 61.05%, Traditional Ethnic 31.20%, Christian 1.85

Ideological Influence: Communism

Head of State: President Lt. Gen. Choummali Saignason

Persecution: In November 2006, 12 pastors and evangelists were arrested and put in prison. Nine of them have since been released, but at press time, three remain in prison. Another Christian, Boon Chan, has been held in prison for nine years. It has become common practice to evict Christians from villages. In April 2007, nine families were evicted from their village by the village leader. The families accepted Christ four years ago and were persecuted until they were thrown out. In May, community leaders in another village rented a truck and forced seven families to move to a Christian village, leaving all their belongings behind. During the month of July, soldiers, police and others killed at least 13 Christians in a crackdown on Hmong villagers accused of stirring rebel dissent.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:15

Lebanon

Lebanon has a constitution promising freedom of religion; yet, Article 473 of the Penal Code stipulates one who "blasphemes God publicly" will face imprisonment for up to a year. Tension leftover from the 16-year long civil war continues. The major danger faced by Christians in Lebanon is from militant elements within the populace.

Religion: Muslim 59.76%, Christian 31.93%

Ideological Influences: Islam

Head of state: President Emile Lahud

Persecution: Unrest and political turmoil help facilitate an environment where Islamic fundamentalists are able to persecute Christians while authorities look away. The Christian population has decreased due to unrest and persecution.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:16

Libya

Libya has been ruled single-handedly by Muammar al-Qadhafi, who is perhaps best known for his associations with other radical regimes and terrorist groups. United Nations sanctions against Libya were lifted in 2003; and in 2004, Qadhafi announced he would pursue an agreement with the West by ending his pursuit and development of weapons of mass destruction. Qadhafi is legitimately concerned about the growing threat of Islamists in his country. For this reason, he has attempted to appease Muslims by broadening Islamic law.

Religion: Muslim 96.50%, Christian 3.00%, Buddhist 0.30%, and non-Religious/other 0.20%

Ideological Influence: A military dictatorship with Islamic influence

Head of State: Muammar al-Qadhafi

Persecution: Libyans are off limits for evangelism. A number of expatriates are seeking to reach Libyans, but they are hindered by the country's elaborate secret police network. Christian literature may enter only through secretive means.

Missionary Opportunity: There are very few Libyan believers, no more than a handful. Almost all Christians are foreign workers, and the government strictly monitors their meetings. There is a limit of one church per denomination per city.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:17

Malaysia

Malaysia is a federation of 13 states and was formed as a monarchy in 1963. There are two distinct parts of Malaysia: Peninsular (West) Malaysia and East Malaysia.

Religion: Muslim 58.00%, Buddhist/Chinese 21.59%, Christian 9.21%, Hindu 5.00%, non-Religious/other 4.50%, Traditional ethnic 1.20%, Baha'i 0.40%, and Sikh 0.10%. Sunni Islam is the official and favored religion in Peninsular Malaysia, and there is continual pressure to apply the same in East Malaysia, where Islam is a minority.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Prime Minister Abdullah bin Ahmad

Persecution: Badawi Malaysia's constitution guarantees religious freedom, but fundamentalist Muslims do everything in their power to inhibit Christian evangelism. Christian literature is limited only to non-Malays. Ethnic Malays are not allowed to have a Christian place of worship. Governmental efforts to prevent the unauthorized use of religious terms have led to the banning of the Indonesian Bible and several other Christian books containing certain phrases common to Islam. Permission to build new churches is rarely granted, and house churches are strongly discouraged.

Missionary Opportunity: There is a lack of Christian workers, and many smaller churches have no trained pastor. Pray Malaysians studying overseas will come to Christ.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:34

Maldives

Maldives is a string of 1,200 islands in the Indian Ocean. Islam is the only recognized religion and is strongly promoted. Neither the press nor non-Muslims are allowed freedom of speech. Outsiders are allowed only brief visits to the Maldives, in order to keep their influence on Muslim communities minimal. Ethnicity is linked to religion; Maldivians must be Muslim. squabbling.

Religion: Muslim 99.41% and Christian 0.10%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom

Persecution: Maldives is one of the least evangelized countries on earth. All citizens must be Muslims. Converts lose citizenship. It is impossible to open any churches. Believers must live their faith in complete secrecy. In 1998, all known Christian foreigners were expelled from the country, and all known Maldivian Christians were arrested. Maldivian Christians are carefully watched. They suffer ostracism, and they cannot openly meet together or read the Scriptures. The Maldives has been called one of the top five worst persecutors in the world.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:34

Mauritania

Mauritania has endured much hardship with long droughts and ethnic squabbling.

Religion: Muslim 99.84% and Christian 0.16%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Maaouya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya

Persecution: Freedom of religion is nonexistent in this state where Islam has dominated for over 1,000 years. It is illegal for citizens to enter non-Muslim households, and anyone who confesses Christ faces the death penalty under the law. Christian literature and religious radio broadcasts are not allowed. The government takes great pains to keep Christianity away from the people.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:35

Mindanao (Philippines)

The Muslim minority in Mindanao, Philippines has been trying to establish an independent Islamic state in the south. According to Compass Direct, a 24-year-old Christian man in Zamboanga City, Philippines, was shot and injured by Muslim activists on November 17, 2004. Several Muslim terrorist organizations exist in the Philippines, such as the Abu Sayyaf and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which have been linked to Al-Qaeda. According to police sources, the groups are attracting new converts to Islam in greater numbers than Muslims born into the faith. "Converts are ideal terrorists because they are eager to prove themselves worthy of their new faith," Chief Superintendent of Police Rodolfo Mendoza recently told a journalist. There are over 200 missionaries working in this area and are doing so at great risk.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:36

Morocco

Morocco was invaded in the 7th century by Arab armies who brought Islam with them. Morocco's late king, Hassan II, even claimed to be a direct descendant of the prophet Mohammed.

Religion: Muslim 99.85%, Christian 0.10%, and Jewish 0.05%. Sunni Islam is the state religion. The government is committed to the preservation of Islam as the religion of all Moroccans.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: King Mohamed VI

Persecution: A Moroccan church consisting of former Muslims cannot be recognized, and other religious groups are tolerated as long as their ministry is confined to expatriate communities. Many have endured ostracism from their families, loss of employment and imprisonment for their faith. However, hearts are being turned toward the gospel of a loving Savior. Disturbed by Islamic terrorism, the king of Morocco wants a Christian influence in the country.

Missionary Opportunity: Missionary work is not permitted, but many foreign Christians are working in secular roles, hoping to win souls to Christ. A Moroccan church is emerging, but at great cost. By the year 2000, about 20 small groups were believed to have existed throughout Morocco. In theory, Bibles may be imported legally, but Arabic versions have been confiscated. However, VOM couriers recently reported that Bibles were well received among the Moroccans they met.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:37

Myanmar (Burma)

Myanmar (Burma) is well acquainted with struggle. Officially, Buddhism is no longer the state religion, but it is actively promoted by the military regime. All those who advocate improved human rights are harassed or imprisoned.

Religion: Buddhist 82.90%, Christian 8.70%

Ideological Influence: Buddhism/Military dictatorship

Head of State: Sr. Gen. Than Shwe

Persecution: The government of Burma continues to discourage, harass and use other, more severe, forms of persecution on any group or belief they consider harmful to the state. Christianity is high on their list for eradication; all the while the government claims freedom of religion. A secret memo entitled "Program to destroy the Christian religion in Burma" details point by point instructions on how to drive Christians out of the state. It calls for anyone caught evangelizing to be imprisoned. VOM has received widespread reports of churches being burned, forcible conversion of Christians to Buddhism and Christian children barred from schools. Ethnic Christians, in particular, are singled out for repression because of the government's goal to create a uniform society of one language, one ethnicity and one religion.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:38

Nepal

Nepal changed from being a Hindu monarchical state to a democratic state in the early 1990s, and a new constitution in 1990 supposedly guaranteed each person the freedom to profess and practice his own religion.

Religion: Hindu 74.82%, Buddhist 16.00%, Muslim 5.00%, Christian 1.89%, Other religions 1.70%, non-Religious/other 0.50%, Sikh 0.06%, and Bahá'í 0.03%. Nepal is the world's only Hindu kingdom. Hinduism is recognized as the national religion, but the constitution guarantees some religious freedom of other faiths. Official religion figures of the 1991 census are suspect with minority religions underrepresented.

Ideological Influence: Hinduism

Head of State: King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shah

Persecution: Proselytizing is banned and carries a three-year jail penalty, but no one thus far has been prosecuted. In the past three years, extremist Hindu organizations from India have set up offices in Katmandu, and aggression against Christians has been on the rise. Militant Hinduists in Nepal aim to drive all Christians from the country.

Missionary Opportunity: Nepal's church has grown. At the climax of persecution in 1990, there were 200,000 Christians; but by the year 2000, there were 400,000. Some even estimate that figure to be 500,000 in 3,000 or more congregation

s. Missions have played a remarkably supportive role in improving health, agriculture and education.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:39

Nigeria

Nigeria has known only one decade of an elected government since it left the British Empire in 1960, until President Olusegun Obasanjo was elected to office in 1999. He was reelected in 2003. Obasanjo has promised reforms, but a culture of greed and corruption runs deep.

Religion: Christian 52.61%, Muslim 41.00%, Traditional ethnic 5.99%, and non-Religious/other 0.40% (Traditional religions are nearer 13 percent of the population, and so both Muslims and Christians are correspondingly lower than the above figures indicate.)

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Olusegun Obasanjo, a committed Christian, has wisely and tactfully moved to bring about change while endeavoring to preserve national unity. The former ruling elite have put forth efforts to frustrate and discredit his administration.

Persecution: Islam has been given preferential treatment over Christianity in the past. Shariah Law has been implemented in 12 of Northern Nigeria's predominately Muslim states. Christian leaders are hopeful Obasanjo's government will continue to crack down on Muslim fanaticism. In 2005, violence against Christians continued. Believers were killed; churches, Christian schools, homes and businesses were burned and destroyed. The government in the past has turned a blind eye.

Missionary Opportunity: The church in Nigeria is strong, but there is concern over the rise of foreign cults and the mixing of Christianity with the country's traditional fetish beliefs. Nigeria has become one of the major missionary-sending countries of the developing world.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:40

North Korea

North Korea is one of the most repressive and isolated regimes in the world and denies every kind of human right to its citizens. The government is believed to possess several nuclear weapons, and multination talks aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear program were intermittent in 2005.

Religion: Non-Religious 64.31%, Traditional ethnic 16.00%, Chondogyo 13.50%, Buddhist 4.50%, and Christian 1.69% (The exact number of Christians is unknown. The figure is an estimate.)

Ideological Influence: One-man dictatorship with communist influence. The country's previous leader, Kim Il Sung, founded an ideology called "Juche," meaning self-reliance, which is enforced in every aspect of the culture by the ruling elite.

Head of State: Kim Jong Il, the son of deceased leader Kim Il Sung

Persecution: All religions have been harshly repressed. Many thousands of Christians have been murdered since the Korean War. In 1953, there were about 300,000 Christians; however, the number has reduced to a few thousand today. Christians must practice their faith in deep secrecy and are in constant danger.

Missionary Opportunity: There are three churches in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, but they are only for show. Many North Koreans have fled to China, some of them Christians, and have been known to return to North Korea to share the gospel. Any North Korean sent back by the Chinese government faces almost certain death. Despite the harsh conditions

ions Christians face in North Korea, the Lord is adding to their numbers daily.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:40

Oman

Oman's Sultan Qaboos bin Said declared, "Oman in the past was in darkness...but a new dawn will rise." While Qaboos was able to increase the country's wealth, darkness persists: the darkness in the hearts of Oman's people caught in the clutches of Islam.

Religion: Muslim 92.66%, Hindu 3.00%, Christian 2.54%, Buddhist 1.20%, non-Religious/other 0.40%, and Bahá'í 0.20%. Ibadi is the state religion. The Sultan has consistently opposed fanatical Islam since his reign began in 1990.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Sultan and Prime Minister Qaboos bin Said al-Said

Persecution: Churches and church activities for the expatriate communities are permitted, but proselytizing Muslims is forbidden.

Missionary Opportunity: The Christian population consists almost entirely of foreign workers, with perhaps no more than 20 indigenous believers. There are four centers where Christians of over 30 denominations or languages meet and where services in many languages are held. The Reformed Church in America has had a good witness in Oman since 1890, when Samuel Zwemer began his work. Their hospital, clinics and missionary workers have been incorporated into the government health services. Christians also have a strong presence in the education and business sectors.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:41

Pakistan

Pakistan gained independence from Britain in 1947, but has been unstable ever since. Its people have suffered through three wars and endured military regimes and corrupt governments.

Religion: Muslim 96.08%, Christian 2.31%, Hindu 1.50%, Bahá'í 0.06%, Other 0.03%, and Traditional ethnic 0.02%. Pakistan is an Islamic republic. Shariah Law has been increasingly applied, even to Christians and Hindus, despite its contravention of the constitution.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President General Pervez Musharraf

Persecution: Militant Islamic forces in Pakistan have initiated much violence against Christians. Many Pakistani Christians have been falsely accused of breaking Law 295—blaspheming Mohammed—a crime punishable by death. Some have even been killed by mobs after being acquitted of such charges. Christians are barred from some professions, and the most menial tasks are reserved for Christians alone. Their testimony in court is half the value of a Muslim's. Several pastors and Christian evangelists were martyred by Islamic militants in 2004, including Pastor George Masih, who was slain in his home for sharing the gospel with Muslim villagers in Manawala. More kidnappings, amputations and violence occurred in 2005 as Muslim persecution of Christians continued.

Missionary Opportunity: Despite hardships, the church has grown. There are 12 Protestant and six Catholic theological colleges and Bible schools.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:42

Qatar

Qatar is almost entirely covered by desert, but there are huge oil reserves beneath the ground.

Religion: Muslim 79.43%, Christian 10.47%, Hindu 7.20%, Buddhist 1.80%, non-Religious 0.90%, and Baha'i 0.20%. The strict Wahhabi form of Sunni Islam is the state religion.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: Amir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani

Persecution: Proselytism of Muslims is forbidden; however, expatriate believers are allowed to practice their faith. In 2000, the Emir granted land for a Christian compound to be built for the purpose of holding services. Criticism of the Muslim faith or the ruling family is a crime.

Missionary Opportunity: There were no Qatari believers before 1985, but several have come to the Lord outside the country and have suffered much for Him.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:43

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has enormous oil wealth that produces two-thirds of the government's revenue. King Fahd, who ascended to the throne in 1982, died in August 2005 at the age of 84. His half-brother, Crown Prince Abdallah, was named as his successor.

Religion: Muslim 92.83%, Christian 4.54%, non-Religious/other 1.40%, Hindu 0.60%, Buddhist/Chinese 0.42%, Sikh 0.19%, and Baha'i 0.02%. Saudi Arabia is an Islamic state, committed to the role of custodian of Islam and its holiest sites. A massive Islamic missionary effort is coordinated by the Muslim World League in Mecca. Billions of dollars are spent every year to propagate Islam worldwide.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: King and Prime Minister Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud

Persecution: Saudi Arabia once had a large Christian population until 1,300 years ago. Islam gained control at that time, and all Christians were expelled. It has been reported that public relations firms in the U.S. have been hired by the country to help cover up its poor human rights record. Any person who does mission work or converts a Muslim faces jail, expulsion or execution. Even foreign Christians visiting Saudi Arabia are not allowed to meet together and worship.

Missionary Opportunity: Despite the threat of persecution, the followers of Christ press on, finding innovative ways to meet and encourage each other.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:44

Somalia

Somalia was taken over in 1969, by dictator Siyaad Barre, who exploited clan warfare within Somalia to retain power. When Barre's government was toppled in 1991, Somalia could no longer be considered a single country but a collection of fighting ethnic groups and clans. With no central government, the enforcement of strict Muslim law varies from area to area. In late 2005, ongoing political turmoil and threats of armed conflict diminished prospects for long-term peace and stability and posed new dangers to the interim government.

Religion: Muslim 99.95% and Christian 0.05%. Islam is the official religion.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed

Persecution: Fellowship among believers is dangerous, since persecution is strong in many parts of the country. A number of believers have been martyred, and others have been publicly named as targets for execution.

Missionary Opportunity: In 1991, there were about 500 Somali Catholics and several hundred evangelicals—mostly secret believers and nearly all in the South with few in Somaliland. Some have fled to nearby countries. Believers who remained in the country press on. Distribution of the Somali Bible is only possible in refugee camps and among Somalis outside the country.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:56

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has experienced violence since 1983 at the hands of Tamil separatists waging war against the Sinhalese majority. Violence intensified in 2006, though a peace accord remains in effect. Buddhism is the state religion and is protected and promoted.

Religion: Buddhist 71.93%, Hindu 12.00%, Muslim 8.00%, Christian 7.62%

Ideological Influence: Buddhism

Head of State: President Mahinda Rajapaska

Persecution: Although freedom for other religions is assured, there has been discrimination against minority religions through taxation, employment and education. Many Sri Lankans perceive Christianity as a foreign religion and a colonial imposition.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:57

Sudan

Sudan is Africa's largest country. The Muslim government of Khartoum in the North has waged a jihad against the mostly Christian South. In January 2005, a peace agreement was signed between the government and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army, thus ending armed hostilities between them. The peace agreement calls for the immediate sharing of oil wealth and a referendum on Southern independence to be held within six years.

Religion: Muslim 65.00%, Christian 23.19%, Traditional ethnic 10.61%, and non-Religious/other 1.20%

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir

Persecution: Deliberate attempts to eliminate a viable Christian presence have been extreme and have included the destruction of hospitals, schools, churches and Christian villages. Pastors and church leaders have been killed. Men, women and children have been threatened with death or torture if they refuse to convert to Islam. In the midst of these atrocities, the Body of Christ in Sudan is growing. Massive population movements have broken down barriers of customs and languages to bring many to Christ from unreached peoples. In 2005, Sudan's new Vice President and Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), Dr. John Garang de Mabior, died in a helicopter crash. This Christian hero's death leaves the future of a peaceful unified Sudan in doubt.

Missionary Opportunity: Only a low-profile spiritual ministry and aid program have been permitted in Khartoum and a few outlying areas. Many ministries are also taking in help to those displaced in the Nuba Mountains and South Sudan.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:57

Syria

Syria became one of the leading nations of refuge for fleeing Iraqi Christians in 2004. (Thousands left Iraq following the bombing of five churches in Baghdad, in August 2004.) Many have immigrated to Damascus, seeking security and economic opportunities.

Religion: Muslim 90.32%, Christian 5.12%, non-Religious 2.90%, Other (Druze, etc.) 1.55%, Baha'i 0.10%, and Jewish 0.01%. In 1973, Syria was declared a secular state with Islam recognized as the religion of the majority, and all other minorities accorded definite rights and privileges with a measure of religious freedom.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Bashar al-Asad

Persecution: Christian minorities are tolerated and have freedom to worship and witness within their own community, but all activities that could threaten the government or communal harmony are watched. Evangelicals currently enjoy good standing, so they are hesitant to jeopardize this by witnessing too openly.

Missionary Opportunity: Syrian Christians are a respected minority. Christians are influential in the cities, professions, politics and the armed forces, but their percentage of the population is shrinking due to a high rate of emigration. Conversions out of Islam are few but increasing. Most churches in Syria are not yet ready to evangelize Muslims. Missionaries are not allowed.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:58

Tajikistan

Tajikistan gained independence from the Soviet Empire in 1992, and since then has suffered from corruption, civil war and poverty. Life in this Muslim country is very harsh, and the influence of Islam is increasing.

Religion: Muslim 89.50%, non-Religious 9.09%, Christian 1.38%, and Other 0.03%. Although 90 percent of its citizens profess to be Muslim, only a fraction regularly practices Islamic ritual. Most are more influenced by superstition and Zoroastrian beliefs. The number of functioning mosques grew in a decade from 18 to 4,000. Muslims have significantly increased their strength in society since the 1997 peace accord granted them participation in the government.

Ideological Influence: Islam and communism

Head of State: President Emomali Rahmonov

Persecution: Religious freedom is guaranteed, but fear of radical Islam provides the government with an excuse to watch all religious activity closely. Proselytism is not forbidden, but any activity causing religious tension is quashed. In January 2004, Pastor Sergei Bessarab was killed by a radical Muslim. He was planting a church in the city of Isfara.

Missionary Opportunity: In 1992, there were only two or three Tajik believers. In 2000, there were several hundred worldwide. The Christian church is mostly ethnic Europeans but has been drastically reduced by emigration.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 1:59

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)

A British-controlled state until 1960, the country was split into Greek (south) and Turkish (north) communities after the Turkish invasion of 1974. In the Turkish North, where almost everyone is Muslim, there is freedom of religion, but evangelization by minority groups is watched. Less than 1 percent of TRNC is Christian. According to Operation World, the Muslim population is very secularized, with about 10 percent regularly attending the mosque.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:00

Tibet (China)

Tibet was invaded by Chinese communists in 1950. Tibet's political and religious leader, the Dalai Lama, was forced to flee to India. The communists soon stripped Tibet of its cultural and religious heritage.

Religion: Lama Buddhist 80%, Muslim 0.2%, Christian 0.2%. Tibetan Buddhism has a strong hold on the people. There is much demonic bondage: The pre-Buddhist Bon religion with its spirit appeasement and occultism permeates society. There are officially 1,780 monasteries and 46,000 Buddhist monks.

Ideological Influence: Communism (China)

Head of State: President Hu Jintao (China)

Persecution: Christians are trapped between the oppression of Buddhism and the oppression of communism. Buddhists who convert to Christianity are forced to overcome many obstacles to grow in Christ.

Missionary Opportunity: There may be about 1,000 evangelical and 2,000 Catholic Christians among the 5 million Tibetans in the world. There are at least two secret groups of Tibetan believers in Tibet.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:01

Tunisia

Tunisia is one of the most progressive and open societies in the Arab world. Most people have secular dreams of wealth.

Religion: Muslim 99.66%, Christian 0.22%, non-Religious/other 0.10%, and Jewish 0.02%.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali

Persecution: Christian literature is not openly distributed; and with so few believers, dissemination is difficult. The government is not favorable to any Christian proselytism, but tolerance is shown to foreign minorities.

Missionary Opportunity: There are about 200 committed, indigenous believers today, but about half that number meets together regularly for worship. A concerted prayer movement for Tunisia in 1999 coincided with significant numbers of people turning to Christ.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:01

Turkey

Turkey, when under the Ottoman Empire, was for centuries the guardian of the holy places of Islam. In the 20th century, the number of Christians in Turkey dropped significantly, and the influence of the Muslim faith is rising.

Religion: Muslim 99.64%, Christian 0.32%, and Jewish 0.04%

Ideological Influence: Secular state with Islamic influence

Head of State: President Ahmet Necdet Sezer

Persecution: The constitutional guarantee of religious freedom has not been fully upheld. Instances of discrimination and harassment of religious minorities are many, but there has been a distinct improvement since 2000. Many politicians, the police and the growing Islamist movement are hostile to anything Christian. The ancient churches survived until the beginning of the 20th century, but since then have been decimated by massacres (Armenians), severe persecution (Assyrians), and emigration (Greeks, etc.).

Missionary Opportunity: Turkey's Christian population has declined from 22 percent to 0.32 percent since 1900. Few of the 66 million Muslims have heard the gospel. A Turkish Protestant Church was legally recognized recently, and as Turkey continues to pursue European Union (EU) membership, there appears to be an increasing openness on the part of the authorities to recognize Turkey as a multicultural, multireligious country.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:02

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan was one of the republics in the former Soviet Union. It had relative freedom in 1991, after the USSR's collapse, but many remnants of the old communist system remain.

Religion: Muslim 91.84%, non-Religious/other 5.47%, Christian 2.66%, and Jewish 0.03%. Islam was severely repressed under communism, but now it is gaining influence and strength.

Ideological Influence: Dictatorship under communist and Islamic influence

Head of State: President Saparmurad Niyazov has built palaces and memorials to himself all over the country, while his citizens suffer in poverty. He calls himself the "King of kings."

Persecution: Constitutionally there is freedom of religion, but in practice this is limited to Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy. All other forms of Islam or minority religions are subject to severe repression and harassment. Christian students attending universities have been threatened with expulsion. Nearly every foreign Christian has been expelled. Several national pastors have been exiled, beaten up, heavily fined and imprisoned. Congregations have been intimidated and forbidden to meet. A new decree in March 2005 sought government control of churches by requiring them "to gain official registration." Evangelical Christians have suffered the most persecution under the government's religious legislation. Participation in unregistered Baptist house churches has resulted in fines, the seizure of family possessions, and deductions from their salary. Several raids against religious communities were launched by the government in August 2004.

Missionary Opportunity: Ethnic Turkmen Christians are few but have increased in 10 years from one or two to possibly 500 to 600. Most Christians are Russians, Ukrainians and Armenians. Among them are a few hundred evangelical believers. However, Christians are still influencing their society.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:03

United Arab Emirates

United Arab Emirates came into being in 1971, when the Trucial States became a loose confederation of sheikdoms.

Religion: Muslim 65.45%, Hindu 17.00%, Christian 9.25%, Buddhist 4.00%, Other 2.50%, non-Religious 1.30%, and Bahá'í 0.50% (Religious figures are estimates.) Islam is the state religion.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayid al-Nuhayyan

Persecution: Only foreign Christians have freedom to worship and witness. Christian education and witnessing to nationals are severely restricted. Few believers have opportunities to openly share their faith.

Missionary Opportunity: Several Christian medical agencies are allowed to operate and show Christ's love to the people of the U.A.E. through selfless service. Signs indicate there are many who are eager to learn about the gospel in private and who enthusiastically receive Christian materials.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:04

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan, once a republic of the Soviet Union, had a period of relative freedom following the fall of the Soviet Empire. The growing Islamist movement has been vigorously suppressed, with Christians also affected by government legislation and actions.

Religion: Muslim 83.50%, non-Religious 14.52%, Christian 1.28%, Buddhist 0.30%, Traditional ethnic 0.20%, and Jewish 0.20%. The country is a secular state that promotes a moderate form of Islam. Almost all the Christians are ethnic minorities.

Ideological Influence: Islam and communism

Head of State: President Islom Karimov

Persecution: Each church must have an official government registration in order to hold services. Police have made unannounced visits to churches demanding to see their registration papers. Churches unable to produce their registration are immediately closed and their doors sealed by the police. Pastors have been arrested and detained and members threatened. Evangelism or missionary activity can earn three years in prison and organizing an unregistered group, five years. Ethnic minorities (Koreans and Russians) have considerable freedom to reach their own people and are doing so. National Security Police raided several churches in 2004, threatening heavy fines if the churches did not register. House-church meetings in Uzbekistan are illegal. In one raid police reportedly said there was no need for Christians or faiths other than Islam in Uzbekistan.

Missionary Opportunity: There are now approximately 1,000 believers in the country affiliated with about 65 unregistered fellowships. A few thousand more are unaffiliated. Most believers are in the city of Tashkent, despite 61 percent of Uzbeks living in rural areas. Expatriate Christians serving the Lord in the country have increased. Bible translation and distribution are an ongoing task.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:05

Vietnam

Vietnam has historically been a hotbed of struggle. The communists had a foothold in North Vietnam and took over all of Vietnam in 1975.

Religion: Buddhist 54.14%, non-Religious 21.80%, Christian 8.16%, Traditional ethnic 8.10%, Cao Dai/Hoa Hoa 5.60%, Chinese 1.10%, Muslim 0.70%, and Baha'i 0.40%. Constitutional guarantees of religious freedom are meaningless, as government policy controls all religious movements, including Buddhism.

Ideological Influence: Communism

Head of State: President Tran Duc Luong

Persecution: Believers are harassed, beaten and imprisoned for illegally preaching or organizing evangelistic activities. Persecution is especially harsh for unregistered and ethnic minority churches. Seeing the role of Christianity in the demise of communism elsewhere, the regime has attempted to either control or wipe out believers. Government efforts have intensified as churches respond to persecution with growth and outreach. Believers see church registration as compromise. Failing to register churches is seen as illegal in the eyes of the government, forcing the church underground. In May 2005, the Vietnamese government promised the U.S. it would begin to allow greater religious freedom. But little has changed since the agreement. Only a handful of Christians have been released from prison, and many have been forced to renounce their faith.

Missionary Opportunity: Instead of being weakened by persecution, the faith of Vietnamese Christians is growing, and the Body of Christ is becoming stronger. A large-scale and sustained turning to Christ is taking place in both the registered and unregistered (underground) church, especially among the mountain tribes of Central and Southern Vietnam. Bible translation is an ongoing task, especially for the ethnic minorities. Christian literature is in great demand but is strictly monitored.

Re: WORLD SITUATION FOR CHRISTIANS, on: 2008/5/23 2:06

Yemen

Yemen was the site of the great cities of the Queen of Sheba, who traded gifts with King Solomon.

Religion: Muslim 99.94%, Christian 0.05%, and Jewish 0.01%. Islam is the official religion, and the legal system is based on Shariah Law.

Ideological Influence: Islam

Head of State: President Ali Abdallah Salih

Persecution: Christianity was strong by 400 A.D., but was almost completely wiped out by the Muslim conquest in the 7th century. It is illegal for non-Muslims to proselytize and for Muslims to convert to Christianity. Due to social pressures, it is dangerous for Yemenis to become believers.

Missionary Opportunity: Through radio broadcasts, tactful evangelism and other factors, perhaps 100 or more Yemenis have trusted in Christ. Most Christians are expatriates, many of whom are Ethiopians. Others are Westerners and South and East Asians who work in secular jobs or serve with a humanitarian NGO (nongovernmental organization) that is permitted to minister in the country. A church in Aden was restored to Christians for worship and wider community service. There is also a need for Yemeni Arabic, Soqotri and Mahri Bibles.

Re: - posted by enid, on: 2008/5/23 5:18

Haven't read through all these posts in their entirety, but there is something I have noticed.

There aren't really any western nations mentioned.

The nearest we get is Colombia.

There aren't any European nations mentioned, unless you include Turkey.

At the same time, that is not surprising.

Thanks for the info. Good research. It shows your care for the body of Christ.

Remember the prisoners, as if chained with them, those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body, Heb 13 v3.