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Source: Wikipedia Article On Persecution Of Christians For “Spiritual Lessons From The Chessboard By The Piece”

Persecution of Christians

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This article is about acts committed against Christians because of their faith. For negative attitudes towards Christians, see [Anti-Christian sentiment](#).



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(January 2015)



A Christian Dirce, by [Henryk Siemiradzki](#). A Christian woman is martyred under [Nero](#) in this re-enactment of the myth of [Dirce](#) (painting by [Henryk Siemiradzki](#), 1897, [National Museum, Warsaw](#)).

Persecution of Christians can be traced [historically](#) based on the biblical account of [Jesus](#) in the [first century](#) of the [Christian era](#) to the [present time](#).^[1] [Early Christians](#) were persecuted for their [faith](#) at the hands of both [Jews](#) from [whose religion Christianity arose](#) and the [Roman Empire](#) which controlled much of the [land across which early Christianity was distributed](#). [Early in the fourth century](#), the religion was legalized by the [Edict of Milan](#), and it eventually became the [State church of the Roman Empire](#).

[Christian missionaries](#), as well as the people that they converted to Christianity, have been the target of persecution, many times to the point of being [martyred for their faith](#).

There is also a history of individual [Christian denominations](#) suffering persecution at the hands of other Christians under the charge of [heresy](#), particularly during the 16th century [Protestant Reformation](#) as well as throughout the Middle Ages when various Christian groups deemed heretical were persecuted by the Papacy.

In the 20th century, Christians have been persecuted by various groups, and by [atheistic states](#) such as the [USSR](#) and [North Korea](#). During the [Second World War](#) members of many Christian churches were persecuted in [Germany](#) for resisting the [Nazi](#) ideology. [Hitler](#) expressed a desire to destroy the

influence of Christian churches within the [Third Reich](#), seeing it as absurdity and nonsense founded on Jewish lies. He planned to do this after the war, and not during it, believing "that suited his immediate political purposes".

In more recent times the Christian missionary organization [Open Doors](#) (UK) estimates 100 million Christians face persecution, particularly in [Muslim-dominated countries](#) such as [Pakistan](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#).^{[2][3]} According to the [International Society for Human Rights](#), up to 80% of acts of persecution are directed at people of the Christian faith.^[4]

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Antiquity

See also: [Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire](#)

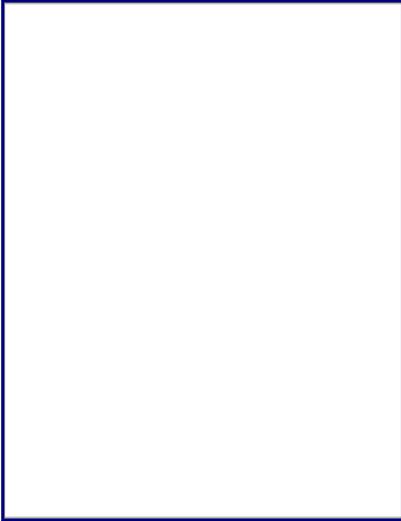
Persecution of Christians in the New Testament

Main article: [Persecution of Christians in the New Testament](#)

[Early Christianity](#) began as a sect among [Jews](#), and according to the New Testament account, [Pharisees](#), including [Paul of Tarsus](#) prior to his conversion to Christianity, persecuted early Christians. The early Christians preached a Messiah which did not conform to the expectations of the time.^[5] However, feeling that Jesus was presaged in [Isaiah's Suffering Servant](#) and in all of Jewish scripture, Christians

had been hopeful that their countrymen would accept their vision of a [New Israel](#).^[6] Despite many individual conversions, a [opposition](#) was found in their countrymen.^[6]

Claudia Setzer asserts that, "Jews did not see Christians as clearly separate from their own community until at least the middle of the second century." Thus, acts of Jewish persecution of Christians fall within the boundaries of synagogue discipline and were so perceived by Jews acting and thinking as the established community. The Christians, on the other hand, saw themselves as persecuted rather than "disciplined."^[7]



The Crucifixion of St. Peter by [Caravaggio](#)

Dissension began almost immediately with the teachings of [Stephen](#) at Jerusalem (unorthodox by contemporaneous Jewish standards), and never ceased entirely while the city remained.^[6] According to [Acts of the Apostles](#), a year after the [Crucifixion of Jesus](#), Stephen was stoned for his alleged transgression of orthodoxy,^[8] with [Saul](#) (who later converted and was renamed *Paul*) looking on.

In 41 AD, when [Agrippa I](#), who already possessed the territory of Antipas and Phillip, obtained the title of *King of the Jews*, in a sense re-forming the [Kingdom of Herod](#), he was reportedly eager to endear himself to his Jewish subjects and continued the persecution in which [James the Greater](#) lost his life, Peter narrowly escaped and the rest of the apostles took flight.^[6]

After Agrippa's death, the Roman procuratorship began (before 41 they were [Prefects](#) in [Judaea Province](#)) and those leaders maintained a neutral peace, until the procurator Festus died and the high priest Annas II took advantage of the power vacuum to attack the Church and executed [James the Just](#), then leader of [Jerusalem's Christians](#).^[6] The New Testament states that [Paul](#) was himself imprisoned on several occasions by Roman authorities, stoned by Pharisees and left for dead on one occasion, and was eventually taken as a prisoner to Rome. [Peter](#) and other early Christians were also imprisoned, beaten and harassed. A Jewish revolt, spurred by the Roman killing of 3,000 Jews, led to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, the end of sacrificial Judaism (until the [Third Temple](#)), and the disempowering of the Jewish persecutors; the Christian community, meanwhile, having fled to safety in the already pacified region of [Pella](#).^[6]

The [New Testament](#), especially the [Gospel of John](#), has traditionally been interpreted as relating Christian accounts of [the Pharisee rejection of Jesus](#) and accusations of [the Pharisee responsibility for his crucifixion](#). The Acts of the Apostles depicts instances of early Christian persecution by the [Sanhedrin](#), the Jewish religious court of the time.^[9]

[Luke T. Johnson](#) nuances the portrayal of the Jews in the Gospels by contextualizing the polemics

within the rhetoric of contemporaneous philosophical debate, showing how rival schools of thought routinely insulted and slandered their opponents. These attacks were formulaic and stereotyped, crafted to define who was the enemy in the debates, but not used with the expectation that their insults and accusations would be taken literally, as they would be centuries later.[10]

[Walter Laqueur](#) argues that hostility between Christians and Jews grew over the generations. By the 4th century, [John Chrysostom](#) was arguing that the Pharisees alone, not the Romans, were responsible for the murder of Christ. However, according to Laqueur: "Absolving [Pilate](#) from guilt may have been connected with the missionary activities of early Christianity in Rome and the desire not to antagonize those they want to convert." [11]

Persecution of early Christians in the Roman Empire



Persecution of the Christians.

Main article: [Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire](#)

Persecution under Nero, 64–68 AD

Main article: [Great Fire of Rome](#)

The first documented case of imperially supervised persecution of the Christians in the [Roman Empire](#) begins with [Nero](#) (37–68). In 64 AD, a [great fire broke out in Rome](#), destroying portions of the city and economically devastating the Roman population. Some people suspected Nero himself as the arsonist, as [Suetonius](#) reported,[12] claiming he played the lyre and sang the 'Sack of [Ilium](#)' during the fires. In his *Annals*, [Tacitus](#) (who wrote that Nero was in Antium at the time of the fire's outbreak), stated that "*to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians (or Chrestians)*[13] *by the populace*" (Tacit. *Annals* XV, see [Tacitus on Jesus](#)). Suetonius, later to the period, does not mention any persecution after the fire, but in a previous paragraph unrelated to the fire, mentions punishments inflicted on Christians, defined as men following a new and malefic superstition. Suetonius however does not specify the reasons for the punishment, he just lists the fact together with other abuses put down by Nero.[14]

Persecution from the 2nd century to Constantine

By the mid-2nd century AD, mobs could be found willing to throw stones at Christians, and they might be mobilized by rival sects. The [Persecution in Lyon](#) in which Christians were mass-slaughtered by being thrown to wild beasts under the decree of Roman officials for reportedly refusing to renounce their faith according to [St. Irenaeus](#)[15] was preceded by mob violence, including assaults, robberies and stonings.[16]

Further state persecutions were desultory until the 3rd century, though [Tertullian's *Apologeticus*](#) of 197 was ostensibly written in defense of persecuted Christians and addressed to Roman governors.^[17] The "edict of [Septimius Severus](#)" familiar in Christian history is doubted by some secular historians to have existed outside Christian [martyrology](#).

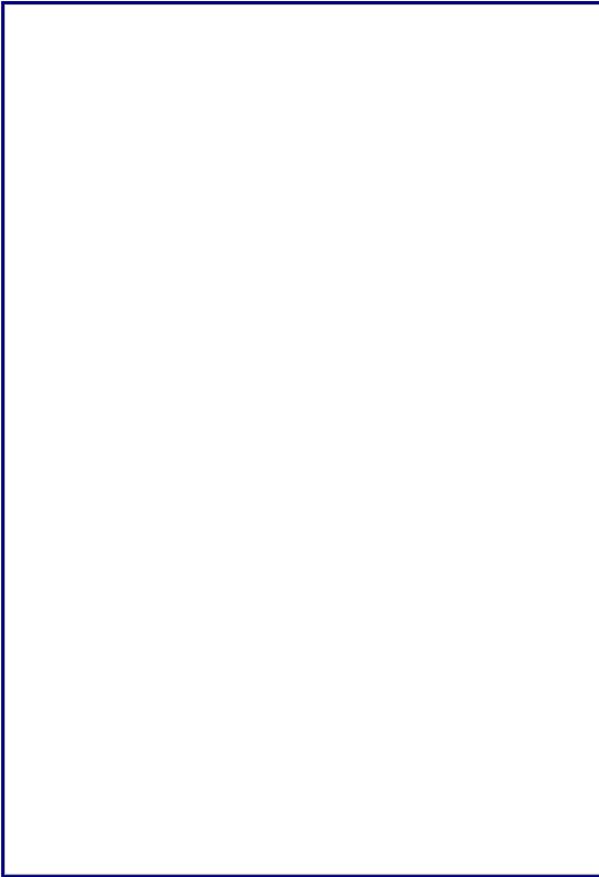
The first documentable Empire-wide persecution took place under [Maximinus Thrax](#), though only the clergy were sought out. It was not until [Decius](#) during the mid-century that a persecution of Christian laity across the Empire took place. Christian sources aver that a decree was issued requiring public sacrifice, a formality equivalent to a testimonial of allegiance to the Emperor and the established order. Decius authorized [roving commissions](#) visiting the cities and villages to supervise the execution of the sacrifices and to deliver written certificates to all citizens who performed them. Christians were often given opportunities to avoid further punishment by publicly offering sacrifices or burning incense to Roman gods, and were accused by the Romans of impiety when they refused. Refusal was punished by arrest, imprisonment, torture, and executions. Christians fled to safe havens in the countryside and some purchased their certificates, called *libelli*. Several councils held at [Carthage](#) debated the extent to which the community should accept these lapsed Christians.

Some early Christians sought out and welcomed martyrdom. Roman authorities tried hard to avoid Christians because they "goaded, chided, belittled and insulted the crowds until they demanded their death."^[18] According to Droge and Tabor, "in 185 the proconsul of Asia, Arrius Antoninus, was approached by a group of Christians demanding to be executed. The proconsul obliged some of them and then sent the rest away, saying that if they wanted to kill themselves there was plenty of rope available or cliffs they could jump off."^[19] Such seeking after death is found in [Tertullian's *Scorpiace*](#) or in the letters of [Saint Ignatius of Antioch](#) but was certainly not the only view of martyrdom in the Christian church. Both [Polycarp](#) and [Cyprian](#), bishops in Smyrna and Carthage respectively, attempted to avoid martyrdom.

Palestinian bishop [Eusebius of Caesaraea](#) described the mass murder of Christians by their fellow Jews during the [Bar Kochba revolt](#) c. AD 132.^[20]

The Great Persecution

Main article: [Diocletian Persecution](#)



"Faithful Unto Death" by Herbert Schmalz

The persecutions culminated with [Diocletian](#) and [Galerius](#) at the end of the third and beginning of the 4th century. The [Great Persecution](#) is considered the largest. Beginning with a series of four edicts banning Christian practices and ordering the imprisonment of Christian clergy, the persecution intensified until all Christians in the empire were commanded to sacrifice to the [Roman gods](#) or face immediate execution. Over 20,000 Christians are thought to have died during Diocletian's reign. One of the most prominent [martyrs](#) during the Dioclecian persecution was [Saint George](#), a Roman soldier who loudly renounced the Emperor's edict, and in front of his fellow soldiers and tribunes claimed himself to be a Christian by declaring his worship of [Jesus Christ](#). Diocletian attempted to convert George, even offering gifts of land, money and slaves if he made a sacrifice to the Roman gods; he made many offers, but George never accepted and was subsequently tortured and decapitated.^[21] Though [Diocletian](#) zealously persecuted Christians in the Eastern part of the empire, his co-emperors in the West did not follow the edicts and so Christians in Gaul, Spain, and Britannia were virtually unmolested.

This persecution lasted until [Constantine I](#) came to power in 313 and legalized Christianity. It was not until [Theodosius I](#) in the later 4th century that Christianity would become the official religion of the Empire. Between these two events [Julian II](#) temporarily restored the traditional Roman religion and established broad religious tolerance renewing Pagan and Christian hostilities.

Martyrs were considered uniquely exemplary of the Christian faith, and few early saints were not also martyrs.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* states that "Ancient, medieval and early modern hagiographers were inclined to exaggerate the number of martyrs. Since the title of martyr is the highest title to which a Christian can aspire, this tendency is natural". Estimates of Christians killed for religious reasons

before the year 313 vary greatly, depending on the scholar quoted, from a low of 10,000 to a high of almost 100,000.

Persecutions of Christians by Persians



[A Converted British Family Sheltering a Christian Missionary from the Persecution of the Druids](#), a scene of persecution by druids in ancient Britain painted by [William Holman Hunt](#).

In AD 341, the [Zoroastrian Shapur II](#) ordered the massacre of all Christians in the [Persian Sassanid Empire](#). During the persecution, about 1,150 [Assyrian Christians](#) were martyred under Shapur II in [Assuristan](#) (Sassanid ruled Assyria).^[22] In the 4th century, the [Terving king Athanaric](#) in ca. 375 ordered a [persecution of Christians](#).^[23]

Persecution of Christians by Jews

In AD 516, a tribal unrest broke out in [Yemen](#) and several tribal elites fought for power, one of those elites was Joseph [Dhu Nuwas](#) or "Yousef Asa'ar", a Jewish warlord as mentioned in ancient south Arabian inscriptions. [Syriac](#) and [Byzantium](#) sources claim that he fought his way because Christians in Yemen refused to renounce Christianity. In 2009, a documentary that aired on [BBC](#) defended the claim that the villagers had been offered the choice between conversion to Judaism or death and that 20,000 Christians had then been massacred stating that "The production team spoke to many historians over 18 months, among them Nigel Groom, who was our consultant, and Professor Abdul Rahman Al-Ansary, a former professor of archaeology at the [King Saud University](#) in Riyadh."^[24] Inscriptions documented by Yousef himself shows the great pride he expressed after Killing more than 22,000 Christians in Zafar and [Najran](#).^[25] Historian [Glen Bowersock](#) described this as "savage pogrom that the Jewish king of the Arabs launched against the Christians in the city of Najran. The king himself reported in excruciating detail to his Arab and Persian allies about the massacres he had inflicted on all Christians who refused to convert to Judaism."^[26] This particular persecution is described and condemned in the [Qur'an](#) and more specifically in its 85th chapter entitled "[Al-Burooj](#)" (zodiacal constellation).^[27]

Persecution of Christians during the Middle Ages

Persecution of Christians by Persians and Jews during Roman-Persian Wars

Main article: [Sasanian conquest and occupation of Jerusalem](#)

Several months after the Persian conquest in AD 614, a riot occurred in Jerusalem, and the Jewish governor of Jerusalem Nehemiah was killed by a band of young Christians along with his "council of the righteous" while making plans for the building of the [Third Temple](#). At this time the Christians had allied themselves with the [Eastern Roman Empire](#). Shortly, the events escalated into a full-scale Christian rebellion, resulting in a battle of Jews and Christians inside Jerusalem. In the aftermath many Jews were killed and survivors fled to Caesarea, still held by the Persian Army.

The Judeo-Persian reaction was ruthless—Persian Sasanian general Xorheam assembled Judeo-Persian troops and went and encamped around Jerusalem and besieged in for 19 days.^[28] Eventually, digging beneath the foundations of the Jerusalem, they destroyed the wall and on the 19th day of the siege, the Judeo-Persian forces took Jerusalem.^[28]

According to the account of [Sebeos](#), the siege resulted in a total Christian death toll of 17,000, the earliest and thus most commonly accepted figure.^[29] 207 Per Antiochus, 4,518 prisoners alone were massacred near [Mamilla reservoir](#).^[30] Christian sources later exaggerated the extent of the massacre, claiming the death toll as high as 90,000.^[29] 207–208 In addition, 35,000 or 37,000 people including the patriarch Zacharias are said to have been deported to Mesopotamia.^[29] 69–71^{[31][32]}: 123 The city is said to have been burn down. However, neither widespread burning nor destruction of churches have been found in the archaeological record.^{[30][33]}

According to the later account of [Antiochus Strategos](#), whose perspective appears to be that of a Byzantine Greek and shows an antipathy towards the Jews,^[34] thousands of Christians were massacred during the conquest of the city. Estimates based on varying copies of Strategos's manuscripts range from 4,518 to 66,509 killed.^[35] Strategos wrote that the Jews offered to help them escape death if they "become Jews and deny Christ", and the Christian captives refused. In anger the Jews allegedly purchased Christians to kill them.^[36] In 1989, a mass burial grave at [Mamilla](#) cave was discovered in by Israeli archeologist Ronny Reich, near the site where Antiochus recorded the massacre took place. The human remains were in poor condition containing a minimum of 526 individuals.^[37]

Persecution of Christians in the Islamic Caliphates

In general, Christians subject to Islamic rule were allowed to practice their religion with some notable limitations stemming from the [Pact of Umar](#). This treaty, enacted in 717 AD, forbade Christians from publicly displaying the cross on church buildings, summoning congregants to prayer by a bell, rebuilding churches in case they were destroyed, and other restrictions.^[38] Historians argue that this treaty lays down the foundation of Islamic [Christianophobia](#)^[39] which is still very prevalent today in [Muslim-majority countries](#) such as Egypt,^[40] Pakistan^[41] and Saudi Arabia still implementing -to a varying degree- some of the guidelines redacted in that document. As [People of the Book](#) Christians were awarded [dhimmi](#) status (along with [Jews](#) and [Mandeans](#)), inferior to the status of Muslims.

At times, anti-Christian pogroms occurred. Under [sharia](#), non-Muslims were obligated to pay [jizya](#) taxes, which contributed a significant proportion of income for the Islamic state and persuaded many Christians to convert to Islam.^[42] According to the [Hanafi](#) school of sharia, the testimony of a non-Muslim (such as a Christian) was not considered valid against the testimony of a Muslim. Other schools differed. Christian men were not allowed to marry a Muslim woman under sharia. Muslim men on the other hand were allowed to marry Christian women who were then expected to convert. Christians under Islamic rule had the right to convert to Islam or any other religion, while a [murtad](#), or apostate of Islam, faced severe penalties or even [hadd](#), which could include the death penalty.

[Tamerlane](#) instigated large scale massacres of Christians in [Mesopotamia](#), [Persia](#), [Asia Minor](#) and [Syria](#) in the 14th century AD. Most of the victims were indigenous [Assyrians](#) and [Armenians](#), members of the [Assyrian Church of the East](#) and [Orthodox Churches](#), which led to the decimation of the hitherto

majority Assyrian population in northern Mesopotamia and the abandonment of the ancient Assyrian city of [Ashur](#).^[43]

China

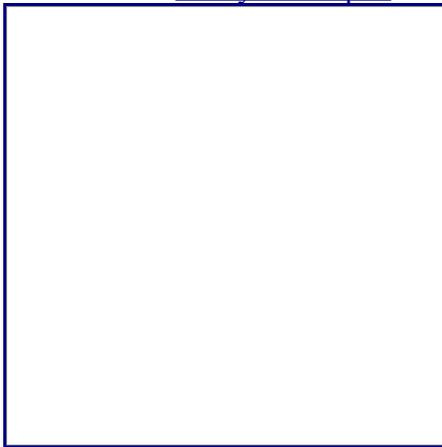
Beginning in the late 17th century, Christianity was banned for at least a century in China by the [Kangxi Emperor](#) of the [Qing Dynasty](#) after the [Pope](#) forbade [Chinese Catholics](#) from [venerating](#) their relatives or [Confucius](#).^[44] During the [Boxer Rebellion](#), anti Christian Boxers, and Muslim [Kansu Braves](#) serving in the Chinese army attacked Christians.^{[45][46][47]}

During the Northern Expedition, the Kuomintang incited anti-foreign, [anti-Western sentiment](#). Portraits of [Sun Yat-sen](#) replaced the crucifix in several churches, KMT posters proclaimed- "Jesus Christ is dead. Why not worship something alive such as Nationalism?". Foreign missionaries were attacked and anti foreign riots broke out.^[48]

During the Northern Expedition, in 1926 in Guangxi, Muslim General [Bai Chongxi](#) led his troops in destroying Buddhist temples and smashing idols, turning the temples into schools and Kuomintang party headquarters.^[49] It was reported that almost all of Buddhist monasteries in Guangxi were destroyed by Bai in this manner. The monks were removed.^[50] Bai led a wave of anti foreignism in Guangxi, attacking American, European, and other foreigners and missionaries, and generally making the province unsafe for foreigners. Westerners fled from the province, and some Chinese Christians were also attacked as imperialist agents.^[51]

Japan

Main article: [Martyrs of Japan](#)



The Christian martyrs of [Nagasaki](#). 17th-century Japanese painting.

[Tokugawa Ieyasu](#) assumed control over Japan in 1600. Like [Toyotomi Hideyoshi](#), he disliked Christian activities in Japan. The [Tokugawa shogunate](#) finally decided to ban Catholicism, in 1614 and in the mid-17th century it demanded the expulsion of all European missionaries and the execution of all converts. This marked the end of open Christianity in Japan.^[52] The [Shimabara Rebellion](#), led by a young [Japanese Christian](#) boy named [Amakusa Shiro Tokisada](#), took place in 1637. After the [Hara Castle](#) fell, the shogunate's forces beheaded an estimated 37,000 rebels and sympathizers. Amakusa Shirō's severed head was taken to [Nagasaki](#) for public display, and the entire complex at Hara Castle was burned to the ground and buried together with the bodies of all the dead.^[53]

Many of the Christians in Japan continued for two centuries to maintain their religion as [Kakure Kirishitan](#), or hidden Christians, without any priests or pastors. Some of those who were killed for their

Faith are venerated as the [Martyrs of Japan](#).

Christianity was later allowed during the [Meiji era](#). The [Meiji Constitution](#) of 1890 introduced [separation of church and state](#) and permitted freedom of religion.

India

Main articles: [Anti-Christian violence in India](#) and [Anti-Christian violence in Karnataka](#)



The [Jamalabad fort](#) route. Mangalorean Catholics had traveled through this route on their way to [Seringsapatam](#)

In spite of the fact that there have been relatively fewer conflicts between Muslims and Christians in India in comparison to those between Muslims and Hindus, or Muslims and Sikhs, the relationship between Muslims and Christians have been occasionally turbulent. With the advent of European colonialism in India throughout the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, Christians were systematically persecuted in a few Muslim ruled kingdoms in India. Modern day persecution also exists carried out by Hindu nationalists. A report by Human Rights Watch stated that there is a rise of anti-Christian violence due to Hindu nationalism and Smita Narula, Researcher, Asia Division of Human Rights Watch stated "Christians are the new scapegoat in India's political battles. Without immediate and decisive action by the government, communal tensions will continue to be exploited for political and economic ends."^[54]

Muslim [Tipu Sultan](#), the ruler of the [Kingdom of Mysore](#), took action against the [Mangalorean Catholic](#) community from [Mangalore](#) and the [South Canara](#) district on the southwestern coast of India. Tipu was widely reputed to be anti-Christian. He took Mangalorean Catholics into captivity at [Seringsapatam](#) on 24 February 1784 and released them on 4 May 1799.^[55]

The Bakur Manuscript^[clarification needed] reports him as having said: "*All Musalmans should unite together, and considering the annihilation of infidels as a sacred duty, labor to the utmost of their power, to accomplish that subject.*"^[citation needed] Soon after the [Treaty of Mangalore](#) in 1784, Tipu gained control of Canara.^[56] He issued orders to seize the Christians in Canara, confiscate their estates,^[57] and deport them to Seringsapatam, the capital of his empire, through the [Jamalabad fort](#) route.^[58] There were no priests among the captives. Together with Fr. Miranda, all the 21 arrested priests were issued orders of expulsion to Goa, fined Rs 2 lakhs, and threatened death by hanging if they ever returned.^[citation needed]

Tipu ordered the destruction of 27 Catholic churches. Among them were the Church of Nossa Senhora

de Rosario Milagres at [Mangalore](#), Fr Miranda's Seminary at [Monte Mariano](#), Church of Jesu Marie Jose at [Omzoor](#), Chapel at [Bolar](#), Church of Merces at [Ullal](#), Imaculata Conceicao at [Mulki](#), San Jose at [Perar](#), Nossa Senhora dos Remedios at [Kirem](#), Sao Lawrence at [Karkal](#), Rosario at [Barkur](#), Immaculata Conceicao at [Baidnur](#). All were razed to the ground, with the exception of *Igreja da Santa Cruz Hospet* also known as [Hospet Church](#) at Hospet, owing to the friendly offices of the Chauta Raja of [Moodbidri](#).^[59]

According to [Thomas Munro](#), a Scottish soldier and the first collector of Canara, around 60,000 of them,^[60] nearly 92 percent of the entire Mangalorean Catholic community, were captured. 7,000 escaped. Observer [Francis Buchanan](#) reports that 70,000 were captured, from a population of 80,000, with 10,000 escaping. They were forced to climb nearly 4,000 feet (1,200 m) through the jungles of the [Western Ghat](#) mountain ranges. It was 210 miles (340 km) from Mangalore to Seringapatam, and the journey took six weeks. According to British Government records, 20,000 of them died on the march to Seringapatam. According to James Scurry, a British officer, who was held captive along with Mangalorean Catholics, 30,000 of them were forcibly converted to Islam. The young women and girls were forcibly made wives of the Muslims living there.^[61] The young men who offered resistance were disfigured by cutting their noses, upper lips, and ears.^[62] According to Mr. Silva of [Gangolim](#), a survivor of the captivity, if a person who had escaped from Seringapatam was found, the punishment under the orders of Tipu was the cutting off of the ears, nose, the feet and one hand.^[63]

The Archbishop of Goa wrote in 1800, *"It is notoriously known in all Asia and all other parts of the globe of the oppression and sufferings experienced by the Christians in the Dominion of the King of Kanara, during the usurpation of that country by Tipu Sultan from an implacable hatred he had against them who professed Christianity."*^[citation needed]



The British officer [James Scurry](#), who was detained a prisoner for 10 years by Tipu Sultan along with the Mangalorean Catholics

Tipu Sultan's invasion of the [Malabar Coast](#) had an adverse impact on the [Saint Thomas Christian](#) community of the Malabar coast. Many churches in Malabar and [Cochin](#) were damaged. The old Syrian Nasrani seminary at Angamaly which had been the center of Catholic religious education for several centuries was razed to the ground by Tipu's soldiers. Many centuries-old religious manuscripts were lost forever. The church was later relocated to Kottayam where it still exists to this date. The Mor Sabor church at Akaparambu and the Martha Mariam Church attached to the seminary were destroyed as well. Tipu's army set fire to the church at Palayoor and attacked the Ollur Church in 1790.

Furthermore, the Arthat church and the Ambazhakkad seminary was also destroyed. Over the course of this invasion, many Saint Thomas Christians were killed or forcibly converted to Islam. Most of the coconut, arecanut, pepper and cashew plantations held by the Saint Thomas Christian farmers were also

indiscriminately destroyed by the invading army. As a result, when Tipu's army invaded Guruvayur and adjacent areas, the Syrian Christian community fled Calicut and small towns like Arthat to new centres like Kunnamkulam, Chalakudi, Ennakadu, Cheppadu, Kannankode, [Mavelikkara](#), etc. where there were already Christians. They were given refuge by Sakthan Tamburan, the ruler of Cochin and Karthika Thirunal, the ruler of Travancore, who gave them lands, plantations and encouraged their businesses. Colonel Macqulay, the British resident of Travancore also helped them.^[64]

Tipu's persecution of Christians also extended to captured British soldiers. For instance, there were a significant amount of forced conversions of British captives between 1780 and 1784. Following their disastrous defeat at the [battle of Pollilur](#), 7,000 British men along with an unknown number of women were held captive by Tipu in the fortress of Seringapatnam. Of these, over 300 were circumcised and given Muslim names and clothes and several British regimental drummer boys were made to wear [ghagra cholis](#) and entertain the court as *nautch* girls or dancing girls. After the 10-year-long captivity ended, James Scurry, one of those prisoners, recounted that he had forgotten how to sit in a chair and use a knife and fork. His English was broken and stilted, having lost all his vernacular idiom. His skin had darkened to the swarthy complexion of [negroes](#), and moreover, he had developed an aversion to wearing European clothes.^[65]

During the surrender of the Mangalore fort which was delivered in an armistice by the British and their subsequent withdrawal, all the [Mestizos](#) and remaining non-British foreigners were killed, together with 5,600 Mangalorean Catholics. Those condemned by Tipu Sultan for treachery were hanged instantly, the gibbets being weighed down by the number of bodies they carried. The Netravati River was so putrid with the stench of dying bodies, that the local residents were forced to leave their riverside homes.^[citation needed]

French Revolution

Main articles: [Dechristianisation of France during the French Revolution](#) and [Revolt in the Vendée](#)



[September Massacres](#), 1792

The Dechristianisation of France during the French Revolution is a conventional description of a campaign, conducted by various [Robespierre](#)-era governments of France beginning with the start of the [French Revolution](#) in 1789, to eliminate any symbol that might be associated with the past, especially the [monarchy](#).

The program included the following policies:^{[66][67][68]}

- the deportation of clergy and the condemnation of many of them to death,
- the closing, [desecration](#) and pillaging of churches, removal of the word "saint" from street names and other acts to banish Christian culture from the public sphere
- removal of statues, plates and other iconography from places of worship
- destruction of crosses, bells and other external signs of worship
- the institution of revolutionary and civic cults, including the [Cult of Reason](#) and subsequently

the [Cult of the Supreme Being](#),

- the large scale destruction of religious monuments,
- the outlawing of public and private worship and religious education,
- forced marriages of the clergy,
- forced abjurement of priesthood, and
- the enactment of a law on 21 October 1793 making all nonjuring priests and all persons who harbored them liable to death on sight.



Mass shootings at Nantes, 1793

The climax was reached with the celebration of the Goddess "Reason" in [Notre Dame](#) Cathedral on 10 November.

Under threat of death, imprisonment, military conscription or loss of income, about 20,000 constitutional priests were forced to abdicate or hand over their letters of ordination and 6,000 – 9,000 were coerced to marry, many ceasing their ministerial duties.^[69] Some of those who abdicated covertly ministered to the people.^[69] By the end of the decade, approximately 30,000 priests were forced to leave France, and thousands who did not leave were executed.^[70] Most of France was left without the services of a priest, deprived of/liberated from the [sacraments](#) and any nonjuring priest faced the [guillotine](#) or deportation to [French Guiana](#).^[71]

The March 1793 conscription requiring [Vendéans](#) to fill their district's quota of 300,000 enraged the populace, who took up arms as "The Catholic Army", "Royal" being added later, and fought for "above all the reopening of their parish churches with their former priests."^[72] A massacre of 6,000 Vendée prisoners, many of them women, took place after the battle of [Savenay](#), along with the drowning of 3,000 Vendée women at Pont-au-Baux and 5,000 Vendée priests, old men, women, and children killed by drowning at the [Loire River](#) at [Nantes](#) in what was called the "[national bath](#)" – tied in groups in barges and then sunk into the Loire.^{[73][74][75]}

With these [massacres](#) came formal orders for forced evacuation; also, a '[scorched earth](#)' policy was initiated: farms were destroyed, crops and forests burned and villages razed. There were many reported atrocities and a campaign of mass killing universally targeted at residents of the [Vendée](#) regardless of combatant status, political affiliation, age or gender.^[76] By July 1796, the estimated Vendean dead numbered between 117,000 and 500,000, out of a population of around 800,000.^{[77][78][79]} Some historians call these mass killings the first modern [genocide](#), specifically because intent to exterminate the Catholic Vendéans was clearly stated,^[80] though others have [rejected these claims](#).

Modern era (1815 to 1989)

Ottoman Empire

Main articles: [Armenian genocide](#), [Assyrian genocide](#) and [Greek genocide](#)



Greek-Orthodox metropolises in Asia Minor, ca. 1880. Since 1923 only the metropolis of Chalcedon retains a small community.

In 1842 [Assyrians](#) living in the mountains of [Hakkari](#) in south east [Anatolia](#) faced a massive unprovoked attack from Ottoman forces and [Kurdish](#) irregulars, which resulted in the death of tens of thousands of unarmed Christian Assyrians. [\[81\]](#)

A major massacre of [Assyrians](#) and [Armenians](#) in the [Ottoman Empire](#) occurred between 1894 and 1897 AD by [Turkish](#) troops and their [Kurdish](#) supporters during the rule of [Sultan Abdul Hamid II](#) (the [Hamidian massacre](#)). The motives for these massacres were an attempt to reassert [Pan-Islamism](#) in the Ottoman Empire, resentment at the comparative wealth of the ancient indigenous Christian communities, and a fear that they would attempt to secede from the tottering Ottoman Empire. Assyrians and Armenians were massacred in [Diyarbakir](#), [Hasankeyef](#), [Sivas](#) and other parts of Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia, by Sultan Abdul Hamid II. These attacks caused the death of tens of thousands of Assyrians and Armenians and the forced "Ottomanisation" of the inhabitants of 245 villages. The Turkish troops looted the remains of settlements and these were later stolen and occupied by Muslim [Kurds](#). Unarmed Christian women and children were raped, tortured and murdered. [\[81\]](#)

The [Young Turks](#) government of the collapsing [Ottoman Empire](#) in 1915 persecuted [Christian](#) populations in [Anatolia](#), [Persia](#) and Northern [Mesopotamia](#). The onslaught by the Ottoman army, including [Kurdish](#) and [Circassian](#) irregulars resulting in an estimated 2.5 million deaths, divided between roughly 1.2 Million [Armenian Christians](#), 0.75 million [Assyrians](#) and 0.75 million [Greek Orthodox Christians](#); a number of [Georgians](#) were also killed. The Genocide led to the devastation of ancient indigenous Christian peoples who had existed in the region for thousands of years. [\[82\]](#)[\[83\]](#)[\[84\]](#)[\[85\]](#)

Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact Countries

Further information: [Persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union](#) and [Persecution of Christians in Warsaw Pact countries](#)

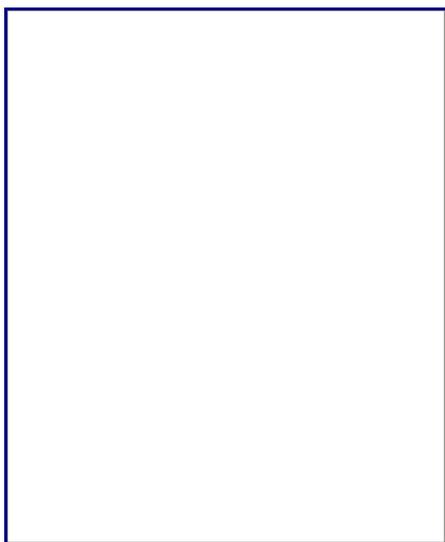
After the Revolution of 1917, the Bolsheviks undertook a massive program to remove the influence of the [Russian Orthodox Church](#) from the government while outlawing antisemitism in Russian society, and promoting state [atheism](#). Tens of thousands of churches were destroyed or converted to other uses, and many members of clergy were murdered, including public executions and imprisonment for what the government termed "anti-government activities." An extensive education and propaganda campaign was undertaken to convince people, especially the children and youth, to abandon religious beliefs. This persecution resulted in the intentional murders of 500,000 Orthodox followers in the 20th century by the Soviet Union. [\[86\]](#)

This persecution affected the Orthodox. It also affected other groups, such as the [Mennonites](#), who largely fled to [the Americas](#). [\[87\]](#)

Before and after the October Revolution of 7 November 1917 (25 October Old Calendar) there was a movement within the Soviet Union to unite all of the people of the world under Communist rule (see [Communist International](#)). This included the Eastern European bloc countries as well as the Balkan States. Since some of these Slavic states tied their ethnic heritage to their ethnic churches, both the peoples and their church were targeted for ethnic and political genocide by the Soviets and its form of [State atheism](#).^{[88][89]} The Soviets' official religious stance was one of "religious freedom or tolerance", though the state established atheism as the only scientific truth (see also the Soviet or committee of the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Scientific and Political Knowledge or [Znanie](#) which was until 1947 called [The League of the Militant Godless](#) and various [Intelligentsia](#) groups).^{[90][91][92]} Criticism of atheism was strictly forbidden and sometimes resulted in imprisonment.^[93] Some of the more high profile individuals executed include [Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd](#), Priest and scientist [Pavel Florensky](#) and Bishop [Gorazd Pavlik](#).

The Communist regime confiscated church property, ridiculed religion, harassed believers, and propagated atheism in the schools. Actions toward particular religions, however, were determined by State interests, and most organized religions were never outlawed. It is estimated that 500,000 Russian [Orthodox Christians](#) were [martyred](#) in the [gulags](#) by the Soviet government, not including torture or other [Christian denominations](#) killed.^{[86][unreliable source?]}

Some actions against Orthodox priests and believers along with execution included [torture](#) being sent to [prison camps](#), [labour camps](#) or [mental hospitals](#).^{[69][94]} The result of [state sponsored atheism](#) was to transform the Church into a persecuted and martyred Church. In the first five years after the Bolshevik revolution, 28 bishops and 1,200 priests were executed.^[95]



[Christ the Savior Cathedral Moscow](#) after reconstruction

The main target of the anti-religious campaign in the 1920s and 1930s was the Russian Orthodox Church, which had the largest number of faithful. A very large segment of its clergy, and many of its believers, were shot or sent to labor camps. Theological schools were closed, and church publications were prohibited. In the period between 1927 and 1940, the number of Orthodox Churches in the Russian Republic fell from 29,584 to less than 500. Between 1917 and 1940, 130,000 Orthodox priests were arrested. The widespread persecution and internecine disputes within the church hierarchy led to the seat of [Patriarch of Moscow](#) being vacant from 1925 to 1943.

After Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Joseph Stalin revived the Russian Orthodox Church to intensify patriotic support for the war effort. By 1957 about 22,000 Russian Orthodox churches had become active. But in 1959 Nikita Khrushchev initiated his own campaign against the

Russian Orthodox Church and forced the closure of about 12,000 churches. By 1985 fewer than 7,000 churches remained active.^[95]

In the Soviet Union, in addition to the methodical closing and destruction of churches, the charitable and social work formerly done by ecclesiastical authorities was taken over by the state. As with all private property, Church owned property was confiscated into public use. The few places of worship left to the Church were legally viewed as state property which the government permitted the church to use. After the advent of state funded universal education, the Church was not permitted to carry on educational, instructional activity for children. For adults, only training for church-related occupations was allowed. Outside of sermons during the celebration of the divine liturgy it could not instruct or evangelise to the faithful or its youth. Catechism classes, religious schools, study groups, Sunday schools and religious publications were all illegal and or banned. This caused many religious tracts to be circulated as illegal literature or [samizdat](#).^[69] This persecution continued, even after the death of Stalin until the [dissolution of the Soviet Union](#) in 1991. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church has recognized a number of [New Martyrs](#) as saints, some executed during [Mass operations of the NKVD](#) under directives like [NKVD Order No. 00447](#).

19th and 20th century Mexico

Main article: [Persecution of Christians in Mexico](#)

In the 19th century, Mexican President [Benito Juárez](#) confiscated church lands. The [Mexican government's](#) campaign against the Catholic Church after the [Mexican Revolution](#) culminated in the 1917 constitution which contained numerous articles which Catholics perceived as violating their civil rights: outlawing monastic religious orders, forbidding public worship outside of church buildings, restricted religious organizations' rights to own property, and taking away basic civil rights of members of the clergy (priests and religious leaders were prevented from wearing their habits, were denied the right to vote, and were not permitted to comment on public affairs in the press and were denied the right to trial for violation of [anticlerical](#) laws). When the first embassy of the Soviet Union in any country was opened in Mexico, the Soviet ambassador remarked that "no other two countries show more similarities than the Soviet Union and Mexico".^[96]

When the Church publicly condemned the anticlerical measures which had not been strongly enforced, the atheist President [Plutarco Calles](#) sought to vigorously enforce the provisions and enacted additional anti-Catholic legislation known as the Calles Law. At this time, some in the United States government, considering Calles' regime [Bolshevik](#), started to refer to Mexico as "Soviet Mexico".^[97]

Wearry of the persecution, in many parts of the country a popular rebellion called the [Cristero War](#) began (so named because the rebels felt they were fighting for Christ himself). The effects of the persecution on the Church were profound. Between 1926 and 1934 at least 40 priests were killed.^[98] Where there were 4,500 priests serving the people before the rebellion, in 1934 there were 334 priests licensed by the government to serve fifteen million people, the rest having been eliminated by emigration, expulsion and assassination.^{[98][99]} By 1935, 17 states had no priest at all.^[100] In the second Cristero rebellion (1932), the Cristeros took particular exception to the socialist education, which Calles had also implemented but which President Cardenas had added to the 1917 Mexican Constitution.^{[101][102]}

Anti-Mormonism

Main article: [Anti-Mormonism](#)

The [Latter Day Saint Movement](#), ([Mormons](#)) have been persecuted since their founding in the 1830s.

This persecution drove them from New York and [Ohio](#) to [Missouri](#), where they continued to suffer violent attacks. In 1838, Gov. [Lilburn Boggs](#) declared that Mormons had made war on the state of Missouri, and "must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state"[\[103\]](#) At least 10,000 were expelled from the State. In the most violent of the altercations at this time, the [Haun's mill Massacre](#), 17 were murdered by an anti-Mormon mob and 13 were wounded.[\[104\]](#) The [Extermination Order](#) sign by Governor Boggs was not formally invalidated until 25 June 1976, 137 years after being signed.

The Mormons subsequently fled to [Nauvoo](#), Illinois, where hostilities again escalated. In Carthage, Ill., where [Joseph Smith](#) was being held on the charge of treason, a mob stormed the jail and killed him. Smith's brother, Hyrum, was also killed. After a [succession crisis](#), most united under [Brigham Young](#), who organized an evacuation from the United States after the federal government refused to protect them.[\[105\]](#) 70,000 [Mormon pioneers](#) crossed the [Great Plains](#) to settle in the [Salt Lake Valley](#) and surrounding areas. After the [Mexican-American War](#), the area became the US [territory of Utah](#). Over the next 63 years several actions by the federal government were directed against Mormons in the [Mormon Corridor](#), including the [Utah War](#), [Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act](#), [Poland Act](#), [Reynolds v. United States](#), [Edmunds Act](#), [Edmunds-Tucker Act](#), and the [Reed Smoot hearings](#).

Kenya

In 2013, Islamic terrorists cornered people in a shopping center in [Nairobi](#) using guns and grenades. They instructed Muslims to leave. Then they shot those remaining non-Muslims, killing 39, and wounding 150.[\[106\]](#)

Madagascar



Christian martyrs [burned at the stake](#) by Ranavalona I in Madagascar

Queen [Ranavalona I](#) (reigned 1828–1861) issued a royal edict prohibiting the practice of [Christianity](#) in [Madagascar](#), expelled British missionaries from the island, and sought to [stem the growth of conversion](#) to Christianity within her realm. Many Malagasy citizens were put to death during this period as a consequence of their refusal to recant their Christian faith.[\[citation needed\]](#) Far more, however, were punished in other ways: many were required to undergo the [tangena](#) ordeal, while others were condemned to hard labor or the confiscation of their land and property, and many of these consequently died. The tangena ordeal was commonly administered to determine the guilt or innocence of an accused person for any crime, including the practice of Christianity, and involved ingestion of the poison

contained within the nut of the tangena tree (*Cerbera odollam*). Survivors were deemed innocent, while those who perished were assumed guilty.

In 1838, it was estimated that as many as 100,000 people in Imerina died as a result of the *tangena* ordeal, constituting roughly 20% of the population.^[107] contributing to a strongly unfavorable view of Ranavalona's rule in historical accounts.^[108] [Malagasy](#) Christians would remember this period as *ny tany maizina*, or "the time when the land was dark". Persecution of Christians intensified in 1840, 1849 and 1857; in 1849, deemed the worst of these years by British missionary to Madagascar W.E. Cummins (1878), 1,900 people were fined, jailed or otherwise punished in relation to their Christian faith, including 18 executions.^[109]

Spain

Main article: [Red Terror \(Spain\)](#)

The Second Republic proclaimed in 1931 attempted to establish a regime with a separation between State and Church as it had happened in France (1905), where Church had to finance itself, had full responsibility and freedom to elect its own bishops, and had to foster religious education outside formal schooling, unlike the Spanish Monarchy up to 1931. When established, the Republic passed a number of laws that prompted big progress in education, but it also challenged the power of Church, impregnating virtually all levels of life in Spain, and entrenched values and traditional public ceremonies. The different Church institutions shifted towards ever more [Manichaeen](#) positions, presenting the situation resulting from the proclamation of the 2nd Republic as an anti-Catholic, Masonic, Jewish, and Communist international conspiracy that heralded a clash between God and atheism, chaos and harmony, Good and Evil.^[110] The Church's high-ranking officials like Isidro Goma, bishop of [Tudela](#), reminded their Christian subjects of their obligation to vote "for the righteous" (specific right and far-right options), and their priests to "educate the consciences."^[111]

A like *catastrophist* approach is attested since way earlier, in 1912, when the bishop of Almería José Ignacio de Urbina (founder of the National anti-Masonic and anti-Semitic League) announced 'a decisive battle that must be unleashed' between the "light" and "darkness."^[112] Since the early stages of the [2nd Spanish Republic](#), far-right forces imbued with an ultra-Catholic spirit attempted to overthrow the Republic by violence. [Carlists](#), Africanistas, and Catholic theologians fostered an atmosphere of social and racial hatred in their speeches and writings.^[113] Their action, as well as further political and ideological confrontation paved the way to the Spanish Civil War and [a planned extermination](#) conceived by the ultra-Catholic military coupists (July 1936).

Persecution of Catholics mostly, before and at the beginning, of the Spanish Civil war (1936–1939), involved the murder of almost 7,000 priests and other clergy, as well as thousands of lay people, by sections of nearly all the leftist groups because of their faith.^{[114][115]}

During the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939, and especially in the early months of the conflict, individual clergymen and entire religious communities were executed by leftists, which included communists and anarchists. The [death toll of the clergy](#) alone included 13 bishops, 4,172 diocesan priests and seminarians, 2,364 monks and friars and 283 nuns, for a total of 6,832 clerical victims.^[114]

In addition to murders of clergy and the faithful, destruction of churches and desecration of sacred sites and objects were widespread. On the night of 19 July 1936 alone, some fifty churches were burned.^[116] In [Barcelona](#), out of the 58 churches, only the Cathedral was spared, and similar desecrations occurred almost everywhere in Republican Spain.^[117]

Exceptions were [Biscay](#) and [Gipuzkoa](#) where the [Christian Democratic Basque Nationalist Party](#), after some hesitation, supported the Republic while halting persecution in the areas held by the [Basque](#)

Government. All Catholic churches in the Republican zone were closed.^{[[citation needed](#)]} The desecration was not limited to Catholic churches, as synagogues and Protestant churches were also pillaged and closed. Some small Protestant churches were spared.^[118]

The terror has been called the "most extensive and violent persecution of Catholicism in Western History, in some way even more intense than that of the French Revolution."^[119] The persecution drove Catholics to the Nationalists, even more than would have been expected, as these defended their religious interests and survival.^[119]

Nazi Germany

Hitler and the Nazis had some support from Christian communities, mainly due to a common cause against the anti-religious Communists. Once in power, the Nazis moved to consolidate their power over the German churches and bring them in line with Nazi ideals. Many historians say that Hitler had a general covert plan, which some say existed even before the Nazis' rise to power, to destroy Christianity within the Reich, which was to be accomplished through control and subversion of the churches and to be completed after the war.^{[120][121][122][123][124][125][126][127][128]}

The Third Reich founded their own version of Christianity called Positive Christianity which made major changes in its interpretation of the Bible which said that Jesus Christ was the son of God, but was not a Jew and claimed that Christ despised Jews, and that the Jews were the ones solely responsible for Christ's death. Thus, the Nazi government consolidated religious power, using allies to consolidate Protestant churches into the Protestant Reich Church. The syncretist project of Positive Christianity was abandoned by 1940.

Dissenting Christians went underground and formed the Confessing Church, which was persecuted as a subversive group by the Nazi government. Many of its leaders were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps, and left the underground mostly leaderless. Church members continued to engage in various forms of resistance, including hiding Jews during the Holocaust and various attempts, largely unsuccessful, to prod the Christian community to speak out on the part of the Jews.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

The Catholic Church was suppressed in Poland. Between 1939 and 1945, an estimated 3,000 members, 18% of the Polish clergy,^[81] were murdered; 1,992 of which died in concentration camps. In the annexed territory of *Reichsgau Wartheland*, it was even harsher than elsewhere. Churches were systematically closed, and most priests were either killed, imprisoned, or deported to the General Government.

The Germans also closed seminaries and convents persecuting monks and nuns. In Pomerania, all but 20 of the 650 priests were shot or sent to concentration camps. 80% of the Catholic clergy and five of the bishops of Warthegau were sent to concentration camps in 1939. In the city of Breslau, 49% of its Catholic priests were killed, and in Chełmno, 48%. 108 of them are regarded as blessed martyrs.^[81] Among them, Maximilian Kolbe was canonized as a saint.

Polish and German Christians persecuted by the Nazis. In the Dachau concentration camp alone, 2,600 Catholic priests from 24 different countries were killed.^[81] Outside mainstream Christianity, Jehovah's Witnesses were direct targets of the Holocaust, for their refusal to swear allegiance to the Nazi government. Many Jehovah's Witnesses were given the chance to deny their faith and swear allegiance to the state, but few agreed. Over 12,000 Witnesses were sent to the concentration camps, and estimated 2,500–5,000 died in the Holocaust.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

In the aftermath of the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Nazi authorities repressed the Czechoslovak Orthodox Church which had given aid to the assassins.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Jehovah's Witnesses

Main article: [Persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses](#)



The [Buchenwald concentration camp](#) is one of the camps in which Jehovah's Witnesses prisoners labored.

Since [Charles Taze Russell's Bible Students](#) group had formed after the [American Civil War](#) there was no formal position on military service till 1914, when the body came out against military service. [Jehovah's Witnesses](#) are forbidden by their religion to engage in violence, or to join the military.

In Nazi Germany in the 1930s and early 1940s, Jehovah's Witnesses refused to renounce political neutrality and were [placed in concentration camps](#) as a result. The Nazi government gave detained Jehovah's Witnesses the option of release by signing a document indicating renouncement of their faith, submission to state authority, and support of the German military.^[129]

Historian Hans Hesse said, "Some five thousand Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to concentration camps where they alone were 'voluntary prisoners', so termed because the moment they recanted their views, they could be freed. Some lost their lives in the camps, but few renounced their faith".^{[130][131]}

Political and religious animosity against Jehovah's Witnesses has at times led to [mob action](#) and government oppression in various countries, including [Cuba](#), the [United States](#), [Canada](#) and [Singapore](#). The religion's doctrine of political neutrality has led to imprisonment of members who refused conscription (for example in [Britain](#) during [World War II](#) and afterwards during the period of compulsory [national service](#)).

Current situation (1989 to present)

According to [Pope Benedict XVI](#), Christians are the most persecuted group in the contemporary world.^[132] The [Holy See](#) has reported that over 100,000 Christians are violently killed annually because of some relation to their faith.^[133] According to the World Evangelical Alliance, over 200 million Christians are denied fundamental human rights solely because of their faith.^[134] Of the 100-200 million Christians under assault, the majority are persecuted in Muslim-dominated nations.^[135] Christians suffer numerically more than any other faith groups or groups without faith in the world. Of the world's three largest religions Christians are the most proportionally persecuted with 80% of all acts of religious discrimination being directed at Christians^[136] who only make up 33% of the world's population.^[137]

Every year, the Christian non-profit organization [Open Doors](#) publishes a list of the top 50 countries where persecution of Christians for religious reasons is worst. The 2014 list has the following countries as its top 10 offenders:^[138]

1. [North Korea](#)

2. [Somalia](#)
3. [Syria](#)
4. [Iraq](#)
5. [Afghanistan](#)
6. [Saudi Arabia](#)
7. [Maldives](#)
8. [Pakistan](#)
9. [Iran](#)
10. [Yemen](#)

Persecution of Christians in the Muslim world

See also: [Anti-Christian sentiment in the Middle East](#) and [Conversion of non-Muslim places of worship into mosques](#)

Christians have faced increasing levels of persecution in the Muslim world. Muslim nations in which Christian populations have suffered acute discrimination, persecution and in some cases death include; [Iraq](#), [Iran](#), [Syria](#), [Pakistan](#), [Afghanistan](#), [Palestinian Territories](#), [Egypt](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), [Turkey](#), [Libya](#), [Yemen](#), [Sudan](#), [Somalia](#), [Qatar](#), [Uzbekistan](#), [Nigeria](#), [Tunisia](#), [Jordan](#), [Oman](#), [Algeria](#), [Mali](#), [Kuwait](#), [Morocco](#), [Bangladesh](#), [Malaysia](#), [Niger](#), [Tanzania](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Tadjikistan](#), [Turkmenistan](#), [Mauritania](#), [Eritrea](#), [Bahrain](#), [Comoros](#), [Djibouti](#), [Brunei](#), [Tanzania](#), [Maldives](#), [Kenya](#), [Chad](#) and [United Arab Emirates](#).^{[139][140][141]}

Furthermore, any Muslim person – including any person born to a Muslim family or having become Muslim at a given point in life – who converts to Christianity is considered to have performed [apostasy](#). Apostasy, the conscious abandonment of Islam by a Muslim in word or through deed, including also conversion to Christianity, is punishable as a crime under the [application of the Sharia](#).

Afghanistan

See also: [Christianity in Afghanistan](#)

In [Afghanistan](#), [Abdul Rahman](#), a 41-year-old citizen, was charged in 2006 with rejecting Islam, a crime punishable by death under [Sharia](#) law. He has since been released into exile in the West under intense pressure from Western governments.^{[142][143]} In 2008, the [Taliban](#) killed a British charity worker, [Gayle Williams](#), "because she was working for an organisation which was preaching Christianity in Afghanistan" even though she was extremely careful not to try to convert Afghans.^[144]

Algeria

See also: [Christianity in Algeria](#)

On the night of 26–27 March 1996, seven [monks](#) from the monastery of [Tibhirine](#) in [Algeria](#), belonging to the [Roman Catholic Trappist](#) Order of [Cistercians](#) of the Strict Observance (O.C.S.O.), were kidnapped in the [Algerian Civil War](#). They were held for two months, and were found dead on 21 May 1996. The circumstances of their kidnapping and death remain controversial; the [Armed Islamic Group](#) (GIA) claims responsibility for both, but the then French military attaché, retired General [Francois Buchwalter](#), reports that they were accidentally killed by the Algerian army in a rescue attempt, and claims have been made that the GIA itself was a [cat's paw](#) of Algeria's secret services ([DRS](#)).

Islamists looted, and burned to the ground, a [Pentecostal](#) church in [Tizi Ouzou](#) on 9 January 2010. The pastor was quoted as saying that worshippers fled when local police left a gang of local rioters

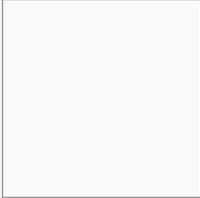
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Egypt

See also: [Persecution of Copts](#)

Part of a series of articles on the

Modern persecution of [Coptic Christians](#)



Overviews

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 - [Zakaria Botros](#)

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- [e](#)

Foreign missionaries are allowed in the country if they restrict their activities to social improvements and refrain from [proselytizing](#). The [Coptic Pope Shenouda III](#) was internally exiled in 1981 by President [Anwar Sadat](#), who then chose five Coptic bishops and asked them to choose a new pope.

They refused, and in 1985 President [Hosni Mubarak](#) restored Pope Shenouda III, who had been accused of fomenting interconfessional strife. Particularly in Upper Egypt, the rise in extremist [Islamist](#) groups such as the [Gama'at Islamiya](#) during the 1980s was accompanied by increased attacks on Copts and on Coptic Orthodox churches; these have since declined with the decline of those organizations, but still continue. The police have been accused of siding with the attackers in some of these cases. [\[146\]](#)

In April 2006, one person was killed and twelve injured in simultaneous knife attacks on three Coptic Orthodox churches in Alexandria. [\[147\]](#)

In July 2012, [Dahshur](#)'s entire Christian community, which some estimate to be as many as 100 families, fled to nearby towns due to sectarian violence. The violence began in a dispute over a badly ironed shirt, which in turn escalated into a fight in which a Christian burned a Muslim to death, which in turn sparked a rampage by angry Muslims, while the police failed to act. At least 16 homes and properties of Christians were pillaged, some were torched, and a church was damaged during the violence. [\[148\]](#)

From 2011 to 2013, more than 150 kidnappings, for ransom, of Christians had been reported in the [Minya governorate](#). [\[149\]](#)

Indonesia

See also: [Christianity in Indonesia](#)

Although Christians are minority in Indonesia, Christianity is one of the 6 official religions of Indonesia and religious freedom is permitted. But there are some religious tensions and persecutions in the country, and most of the tensions and persecutions are civil and not by state.

In January 1999 [\[150\]](#)[\[151\]](#) tens of thousands died when Muslim gunmen terrorized Christians who had voted for independence in [East Timor](#). [\[152\]](#)

In [Indonesia](#), religious conflicts have typically occurred in [Western New Guinea](#), [Maluku](#) (particularly [Ambon](#)), and [Sulawesi](#). The presence of Muslims in these traditionally Christian regions is in part a result of the *transmigrasi* program of population re-distribution. Conflicts have often occurred because of the aims of radical [Islamist](#) organizations such as [Jemaah Islamiah](#) or [Laskar Jihad](#) to impose [Sharia](#), [\[153\]](#)[\[154\]](#) with such groups attacking Christians and destroying over 600 churches. [\[155\]](#) In 2006 three Christian girls were beheaded as retaliation for previous Muslim deaths in Christian-Muslim rioting. [\[156\]](#) The men were imprisoned for the murders, including Jemaah Islamiyah's district ringleader Hasanuddin. [\[157\]](#) On going to jail, Hasanuddin said, "It's not a problem (if I am being sentenced to prison), because this is a part of our struggle." [\[158\]](#) Later on November 2011, another attack from Islamic community happen in Ambon. Muslims set fire to several Christian houses, forcing the occupants to leave the buildings. [\[159\]](#)

In December 2011, a second church in [Bogor](#), [West Java](#) was ordered to halt its activities by the local mayor. Another Catholic church had been built there in 2005. Previously a Christian church, GKI Taman Yasmin, had been sealed. Local authorities refused to lift a ban on the activities of the church, despite an order from the [Supreme Court of Indonesia](#). [\[160\]](#) Local authorities have persecuted the Christian church for three years. While the state has ordered religious toleration, it has not enforced these orders. [\[161\]](#)

In [Aceh Province](#), the only province in [Indonesia](#) with autonomous Islamic Shari'a Law, 20 churches in [Singkil Regency](#) face threat of demolition due to gubernatorial decree requires the approval of 150 worshippers, while the ministerial decree also requires the approval of 60 local residents of different

faiths. On 30 April 2012, all the 20 churches (17 Protestant churches, 2 Catholic churches and one place of worship belonging to followers of a local nondenominational faith) have been closed down by order, from the Acting Regent which also ordered members of the congregations to tear down the churches by themselves. Most of the churches slated for demolition were built in 1930s and 1940s. The regency has 2 churches open, both built after 2000.[\[162\]](#)[\[163\]](#)

Iran

See also: [Christianity in Iran](#)

The [Assyrian Genocide](#) and [Armenian Genocide](#) of World War I conducted by invading Turks drastically reduced the Christian population of Iran, as they did with Turkey, Iraq and to a lesser degree north east Syria.

Though [Iran](#) recognizes [Assyrian](#) and [Armenian](#) Christians as ethnic and religious minorities (along with [Jews](#) and [Zoroastrians](#)) and they have representatives in the [Parliament](#), after the [1979 Revolution](#), Muslim converts to Christianity (typically to Protestant Christianity) have been arrested and sometimes executed.[\[164\]](#) [Youcef Nadarkhani](#) is an Iranian Christian pastor who was arrested on charges of Apostasy in October 2009 and was subsequently sentenced to death. In June 2011 the Iranian Supreme Court overruled his death sentence on condition that he recant, which he refused to do.[\[165\]](#) In a reversal on 8 of September 2012 he was acquitted of the charges of apostasy and extortion, and sentenced to time served for the charge of "propaganda against the regime," and immediately released.[\[166\]](#)

Iraq

See also: [Christianity in Iraq](#) and [Assyrian exodus from Iraq](#)

According to [UNHCR](#), although Christians (almost exclusively ethnic [Assyrians](#) and [Armenians](#)) now represent less than 5% of the total Iraqi population, they make up 40% of the refugees now living in nearby countries.[\[167\]](#) Northern Iraq remained predominantly [Assyrian](#), [Eastern Aramaic](#) speaking and [Christian](#) until the destructions of [Tamerlane](#) at the end of the 14th century. The [Assyrian Church of the East](#) has its origin in what is now South East [Turkey](#) and [Assuristan](#) (Sassanid [Assyria](#)). By the end of the 13th century there were twelve [Nestorian](#) dioceses in a strip from [Peking](#) to [Samarkand](#). When the 14th-century Muslim warlord of Turco-Mongol descent, [Timur](#) (Tamerlane), conquered [Persia](#), [Mesopotamia](#) and [Syria](#), the civilian population was decimated. Timur had 70,000 [Assyrian Christians](#) beheaded in [Tikrit](#), and 90,000 more in [Baghdad](#).[\[168\]](#)[\[169\]](#)

The [Hamidian Masacres](#) and [Assyrian Genocide](#) (1914–18) were followed by a further series of killings in 1933, with the [Simele Massacre](#) which accounted for the slaughter of thousands of [Assyrian Christians](#).

In 1987, the last Iraqi census counted 1.4 million Christians.[\[170\]](#) They were tolerated under the [secular](#) regime of [Saddam Hussein](#), who even made one of them, [Tariq Aziz](#) his deputy. However persecution by [Saddam Hussein](#) continued against the Christians on an [ethnic](#), cultural and racial level, as the vast majority are Mesopotamian [Eastern Aramaic](#) speaking Ethnic Assyrians (aka [Chaldo-Assyrians](#)). The Assyrian -Aramaic language and written script was repressed, the giving of Hebraic/Aramaic Christian names or [Akkadian/Assyro-Babylonian](#) names forbidden ([Tariq Aziz](#)'s real name is Michael Youhanna for example), and Saddam exploited religious differences between Assyrian denominations such as [Chaldean Catholics](#), [Assyrian Church of the East](#), [Syriac Orthodox Church](#), [Assyrian Pentecostal Church](#) and [Ancient Church of the East](#), in an attempt to divide them. Many Assyrians and Armenians were ethnically cleansed from their towns and villages under the [al Anfal](#)

[Campaign](#) in 1988, despite this campaign being aimed primarily at Kurds.

In 2004, five churches were destroyed by bombing, and Christians were targeted by kidnappers and Islamic extremists, leading to tens of thousands of Christians fleeing to Assyrian regions in the north or leaving the country altogether.[\[171\]](#)[\[172\]](#)

In 2006, the number of Assyrian Christians dropped to between 500,000 to 800,000, of whom 250,000 lived in [Baghdad](#).[\[173\]](#) An exodus to the [Assyrian homeland](#) in northern Iraq, and to neighboring countries of [Syria](#), [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#) and [Turkey](#) left behind closed parishes, seminaries and convents. As a small minority, who until recently were without a militia of their own, Assyrian Christians were persecuted by both [Shi'a](#) and [Sunni](#) Muslim militias, [Kurdish](#) Nationalists, and also by criminal gangs.[\[174\]](#)[\[175\]](#)

As of 21 June 2007, the [UNHCR](#) estimated that 2.2 million Iraqis had been displaced to neighbouring countries, and 2 million were displaced internally, with nearly 100,000 Iraqis fleeing to Syria and Jordan each month.[\[176\]](#)[\[177\]](#) A 25 May 2007 article notes that in the past seven months 69 people from [Iraq](#) have been granted [refugee](#) status in the United States.[\[178\]](#)

In 2007, [Chaldean Catholic Church](#) priest Fr. [Ragheed Aziz Ganni](#) and subdeacons [Basman Yousef Dawid](#), [Wahid Hanna Esho](#), and [Gassan Isam Bidawed](#) were killed in the ancient city of [Mosul](#).[\[179\]](#) Ganni was driving with his three deacons when they were stopped and demanded to convert to Islam, when they refused they were shot.[\[179\]](#) Ganni was the pastor of the Chaldean Church of the Holy Spirit in [Mosul](#) and a graduate from the [Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Angelicum](#) in Rome in 2003 with a licentiate in [ecumenical theology](#). Six months later, the body of [Paulos Faraj Rahho](#), archbishop of [Mosul](#), was found buried near [Mosul](#). He was kidnapped on 29 February 2008 when his bodyguards and driver were killed.[\[180\]](#) See [2008 attacks on Christians in Mosul](#) for more details.

In 2010 there was an attack on the *Our Lady of Salvation* [Syriac Catholic cathedral](#)[\[181\]](#) of [Baghdad, Iraq](#), that took place during Sunday evening [Mass](#) on 31 October 2010. The attack left at least 58 people dead, after more than 100 had been taken hostage. The [al-Qaeda](#)-linked [Sunni](#) insurgent group.[\[182\]](#) The [Islamic State of Iraq](#) claimed responsibility for the attack; though Shia cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Iraq's highest Catholic cleric condemned the attack, amongst others.

In 2013, Assyrian Christians were departing for their ancestral heartlands in the [Nineveh plains](#), around [Mosul](#), [Arbil](#) and [Kirkuk](#). Assyrian militias were established to protect villages and towns.[\[183\]](#)[\[184\]](#)

During the [2014 Northern Iraq offensive](#), the [Islamic State of Iraq](#) issued a decree in July that all indigenous Assyrian Christians in the area of its control must leave the lands they have occupied for 5000 years, be subject to [extortion](#) in the form of [a special tax](#) of approximately \$470 per family, convert to Islam, or be murdered. Many of them took refuge in nearby [Kurdish](#)-controlled regions of Iraq.[\[185\]](#) Christian homes have been painted with the [Arabic letter](#) ن (*nūn*) for [Nassarah](#) (an Arabic word Christian) and a declaration that they are the "property of the [Islamic State](#)". On 18 July, the Islamists seemed to have changed their minds and announced that all Christians would need to leave or be killed. Most of those who left had their valuable possessions stolen by the Islamists.[\[186\]](#) According to Patriarch [Louis Sako](#), there are no Christians remaining in the once Christian dominated city of [Mosul](#) for the first time in the nation's history, although this situation has not been verified.[\[185\]](#)

During an attack on the Assyrian Christian town of Qaraqosh, a 5-year-old boy, who's the son of a founding member of St. George's Anglican Church in Baghdad, was slaughtered by Islamic State terrorists, better known as ISIS, who cut the boy in half.[\[187\]](#)

Malaysia

See also: [Christianity in Malaysia](#) and [Freedom of religion in Malaysia](#)

In [Malaysia](#), although Islam is the official religion, Christianity is tolerated under Article 3 and Article 11 of the [Malaysian constitution](#). But at some point, the spread of Christianity is a particular sore point for the Muslim majority, the Malaysian government has also persecuted Christian groups who were perceived to be attempting to proselytize Muslim audiences.[\[188\]](#) Those showing interest in the Christian faith or other faith practices not considered orthodox by state religious authorities are usually sent either by the police or their family members to state funded *Faith Rehabilitation Centres* ([Malay: Pusat Pemulihan Akidah](#)) where they are counseled to remain faithful to Islam and some states have provisions for penalties under their respective [Shariah](#) legislations for apostasy from Islam.[\[189\]](#)

It has been the practice of the church in Malaysia to not actively proselytize to the Muslim community. Christian literature are required by law to carry a caption "for non-Muslims only". Article 11(4) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia allows the states to prohibit the propagation of other religions to Muslims, and most (with the exception of Penang, Sabah, Sarawak and the Federal Territories) have done so. There is no well researched agreement on the actual number of Malaysian Muslim converts to Christianity in Malaysia.[\[190\]](#) According to the latest population census released by the Malaysian Statistics Department, there are none, according to Ustaz Ridhuan Tee, they are 135 and according to Tan Sri Dr Harussani Zakaria, they are 260,000.[\[190\]](#) See also [Status of religious freedom in Malaysia](#).

There are, however, cases in which a Muslim will adopt the Christian faith without declaring his/her apostasy openly. In effect, they are practising Christians, but legally Muslims.[\[191\]](#)

Pakistan

See also: [Christianity in Pakistan](#)

In [Pakistan](#), 1.5% of the population are [Christian](#). [Pakistani law](#) mandates that "[blasphemies](#)" of the [Qur'an](#) are to be met with punishment. At least a dozen Christians have been given death sentences,[\[192\]](#) and half a dozen murdered after being accused of violating blasphemy laws. In 2005, 80 Christians were behind bars due to these laws.[\[193\]](#)

Ayub Masih, a Christian, was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death in 1998. He was accused by a neighbor of stating that he supported British writer [Salman Rushdie](#), author of *The Satanic Verses*. Lower appeals courts upheld the conviction. However, before the [Pakistan Supreme Court](#), his lawyer was able to prove that the accuser had used the conviction to force Masih's family off their land and then acquired control of the property. Masih has been released.[\[194\]](#)

In October 2001, gunmen on motorcycles opened fire on a Protestant congregation in the [Punjab](#), killing 18 people. The identities of the gunmen are unknown. Officials think it might be a [banned](#) Islamic group.[\[195\]](#)

In March 2002, five people were killed in an attack on a church in [Islamabad](#), including an American schoolgirl and her mother.[\[196\]](#)

In August 2002, masked gunmen stormed a Christian missionary school for foreigners in Islamabad; six people were killed and three injured. None of those killed were children of foreign missionaries.[\[197\]](#)

In August 2002, grenades were thrown at a church in the grounds of a Christian hospital in north-west Pakistan, near Islamabad, killing three nurses.[\[198\]](#)

On 25 September 2002, two terrorists entered the "Peace and Justice Institute", [Karachi](#), where they

separated Muslims from the Christians, and then murdered seven Christians by shooting them in the head.[\[199\]](#)[\[200\]](#) All of the victims were Pakistani Christians. Karachi police chief Tariq Jamil said the victims had their hands tied and their mouths had been covered with tape.

In December 2002, three young girls were killed when a hand grenade was thrown into a church near Lahore on Christmas Day.[\[201\]](#)

In November 2005, 3,000 militant Islamists attacked Christians in Sangla Hill in Pakistan and destroyed [Roman Catholic](#), [Salvation Army](#) and United [Presbyterian](#) churches. The attack was over allegations of violation of blasphemy laws by a Pakistani Christian named Yousaf Masih. The attacks were widely condemned by some political parties in Pakistan.[\[202\]](#)

On 5 June 2006, a Pakistani Christian, Nasir Ashraf, was assaulted for the "sin" of using public drinking water facilities near [Lahore](#).[\[203\]](#)

One year later, in August 2007, a Christian missionary couple, Rev. Arif and Kathleen Khan, were gunned down by militant Islamists in [Islamabad](#). Pakistani police believed that the murders was committed by a member of Khan's parish over alleged sexual harassment by Khan. This assertion is widely doubted by Khan's family as well as by Pakistani Christians.[\[204\]](#)[\[205\]](#)

In August 2009, six Christians, including four women and a child, were burnt alive by [Muslim](#) militants and a church set ablaze in [Gojra](#), Pakistan when [violence](#) broke out after alleged desecration of a [Qur'an](#) in a wedding ceremony by Christians.[\[206\]](#)[\[207\]](#)

On 8 November 2010, a Christian woman from [Punjab Province](#), [Asia Noreen Bibi](#), was sentenced to death by hanging for violating Pakistan's blasphemy law. The accusation stemmed from a 2009 incident in which Bibi became involved in a religious argument after offering water to thirsty Muslim farm workers. The workers later claimed that she had blasphemed the [Muhammed](#). As of 8 April 2011, Bibi is in solitary confinement. Her family has fled. No one in Pakistan convicted of blasphemy has ever been executed. A cleric has offered \$5,800 to anyone who kills her.[\[208\]](#)[\[209\]](#)

On 2 March 2011, the only Christian minister in the Pakistan government was shot dead. [Shahbaz Bhatti](#), [Minister for Minorities](#), was in his car along with his niece. Around 50 bullets struck the car. Over 10 bullets hit Bhatti. Before his death, he had publicly stated that he was not afraid of the Taliban's threats and was willing to die for his faith and beliefs. He was targeted for opposing the anti-free speech ["blasphemy" law](#), which punishes insulting Islam or its Prophet.[\[210\]](#) A fundamentalist Muslim group claimed responsibility.[\[211\]](#)

Saudi Arabia



"Non-Muslim Bypass:" Non-Muslims are barred from entering [Mecca](#).[\[212\]](#)[\[213\]](#)

See also: [Christianity in Saudi Arabia](#) and [Freedom of religion in Saudi Arabia](#)

[Saudi Arabia](#) is an [Islamic state](#) that practices [Wahhabism](#) and restricts all other religions, including the possession of religious items such as the Bible, crucifixes, and Stars of David.[\[214\]](#) Christians are arrested and lashed in public for practicing their faith openly.[\[215\]](#) Strict [sharia](#) is enforced. Muslims

are forbidden to convert to another religion. If one does so and does not recant, they can be executed. [\[216\]](#)

Somalia

See also: [Christianity in Somalia](#)

Christians in Somalia face persecution associated with the ongoing [civil war](#) in that country. [\[217\]](#)

Sudan

See also: [Christianity in Sudan](#)

During the [Second Sudanese Civil War](#) people were taken into slavery; estimates of abductions range from 14,000 to 200,000. Abduction of [Dinka](#) women and children was common. [\[218\]](#)

Syria

See also: [Christianity in Syria](#) and [Persecution of Assyrians by ISIL](#)

Syria has been home to Christianity from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD onwards. The majority of Syrian Christians are once [Western Aramaic](#) speaking but now largely Arabic speaking [Arameans-Syriacs](#), with smaller minorities of [Eastern Aramaic](#) speaking [Assyrians](#) and [Armenians](#) also extant.

While religious persecution has been relatively low level compared to other Middle Eastern nations, many of the Christians have been pressured into identifying as Arab Christians, with the Assyrian and Armenian groups retaining their native languages.

Some 13 nuns and three workers from a Greek Orthodox monastery in the Christian village of Maaloula were also kidnapped. [\[219\]](#)[\[unreliable source\]](#)

Tunisia

See also: [Christianity in Tunisia](#)

Since the [Tunisian revolution](#) of 2011, there has been religious violence consisting of Muslim attacks on Christians in Tunisia. [\[220\]](#)[\[unreliable source\]](#)

Turkey

See also: [Christianity in Turkey](#) and [Bible publishing firm murders in Malatya, Turkey](#)



[Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople](#) inside the ruins of the destroyed Orthodox church of [Saint Constantine](#), Istanbul.

The Orthodox population of Turkey was substantially reduced as a result of the [Greek genocide](#) preceding and during [World War I](#). Additionally, the vast majority of Greek Orthodox Christians were forced to leave the territory of Turkey in a population swap following the [Treaty of Lausanne](#). Included among that transfer were many Turkish speaking Christians, who were nonetheless sent to Greece. After years of persecution (e.g. the [Varlık Vergisi](#) and the [Istanbul Pogrom](#)), [emigration](#) Greek Orthodox from the Istanbul region greatly accelerated, reducing the 119,822 [\[221\]](#)-strong Greek minority before the attack to about 7,000 by 1978.[\[222\]](#) The 2008 figures released by the [Turkish Foreign Ministry](#) places the current number of Turkish Greek Orthodox at the 3,000–4,000 mark.[\[223\]](#) The different Christian communities as Armenians and the Catholic community in Istanbul was also targeted during [Istanbul Pogrom](#).

While [Varlık Vergisi](#) ("Wealth tax" or "Capital tax") was a Turkish tax levied on the wealthy citizens of Turkey in 1942, with the stated aim of raising funds for the country's defense in case of an eventual entry into World War II. However, those who suffered most severely were non-Muslims like the [Jews](#), [Greeks](#), [Armenians](#), and [Levantine Catholics](#), who controlled a large portion of the economy.[\[224\]](#) Though it was the [Armenians](#) who were most heavily taxed.[\[225\]](#)

The [Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople](#) is still in a difficult position. Turkey requires by law that the [Ecumenical Patriarch](#) must be an [ethnic Greek](#), holding Turkish citizenship by birth, although most of the [Greek minority](#) has been expelled. The state's expropriation of church property and the closing of the Orthodox [Theological School of Halki](#) are also difficulties faced by the Church of Constantinople. Despite appeals from the United States, the [European Union](#) and various governmental and non-governmental organizations, the School remains closed since 1971. In November 2007, a 17th-century chapel of *Our Lord's Transfiguration* at the Halki seminary was almost totally demolished by the Turkish forestry authority.[\[226\]](#) There was no advance warning given for the demolition work and it was stopped after appeals by the [Ecumenical Patriarch](#).[\[227\]](#)

The difficulties currently experienced by the [Armenian Orthodox minority in Turkey](#) are a result of an anti-Armenian and anti-Christian attitude by [ultra-nationalist](#) groups such as the [Grey Wolves](#). According to [Minority Rights Group](#), while the government recognizes Armenians as minorities but as used in Turkey, this term denotes second-class status.[\[228\]](#) In the aftermath of the [Sheikh Said rebellion](#), the [Syriac Orthodox Church](#) was subjected to harassment by Turkish authorities, on the

grounds that some Assyrians allegedly collaborated with the rebelling [Kurds](#).^[229] Consequently, mass deportations took place and Patriarch Mar Ignatius Elias III was expelled from [Mor Hananyo Monastery](#) which was turned into a Turkish barrack. The patriarchal seat was then transferred to [Homs](#) temporarily.

In February 2006, [Father Andrea Santoro](#) was murdered in [Trabzon](#).^[230] on April 18, 2007 in Zirve Publishing House, [Malatya, Turkey](#)^{[231][232]} Three employees of the [Bible](#) publishing house were attacked, tortured and murdered by five [Sunni Muslim](#) assailants.

India

Main article: [Anti-Christian violence in India](#)

See also: [Christianity in India](#)

Tippu Sultan (1795) captured nearly 60,000 people from Mangalorean Catholic community. 7,000 escaped. Tippu Sultan's also did lot of damages and destruction to the first century malankara (Syrian) [St. Thomas Christians](#) in Kerala. Tippu Sultan's army set fire to the church at Palayoor and attacked the Ollur Church in 1790. Along with the old Syrian seminary at Angamaly, many churches in the Malabar and Cochin were damaged. The Mor Sabor church at Akaparambu and the Martha Mariam Church attached to the old seminary at Angamaly were brunt.

Muslims in India who convert to Christianity have been subjected to harassment, intimidation, and attacks by Muslims. In [Jammu and Kashmir](#), the only Indian state with a Muslim majority, a Christian convert and missionary, Bashir Tantray, was killed, allegedly by militant Islamists in 2006.^[233] A Christian priest, K.K. Alavi, a 1970 convert from Islam,^[234] thereby raised the ire of his former Muslim community and received many death threats. An Islamic terrorist group named "The [National Development Front](#)" actively campaigned against him.^[235] In the southern state of India, [Kerala](#) which has an ancient pre-Islamic community of [Eastern Rite Christians](#), [Islamic Terrorists chopped off the hand of Professor T.J. Joseph due to allegation of blasphemy of prophet](#).



A Christian girl who was burned during religious violence in Orissa.

The [Hindu nationalist Sangh Parivar](#) and related organisations have stated that the violence is an expression of "spontaneous anger" of "vanvasis" against "[forcible conversion](#)" activities undertaken by missionaries. These claims have been disputed by Christians^[236] a belief described as [mythical](#)^[237] and [propaganda](#) by Sangh Parivar;^[238] the Parivar objects in any case to all conversions as a "threat to national unity".^[239] Religious scholar Cyril Veliath of [Sophia University](#) stated that the Hindu attacks on Christians were the work of individuals motivated by "disgruntled politicians or phony religious leaders" and where religion is concerned the typical Hindu is an "exceptionally amicable and tolerant person (...) Hinduism as a religion could well be one of the most accommodating in the world. Rather than confront and destroy, it has a tendency to welcome and assimilate."^[240] According to Rudolf C Heredia, religious conversion was a critical issue even before the creation of the modern state.

[Mohandas K. Gandhi](#) opposed the Christian missionaries calling them as the remnants of colonial Western culture.^[241] He claimed that by converting into Christianity, Hindus have changed their nationality.^[242]

In [its controversial annual human rights reports](#) for 1999, the [United States Department of State](#) criticised India for "increasing societal violence against Christians."^[243] The report listed over 90 incidents of anti-Christian violence, ranging from damage of religious property to violence against Christians pilgrims.^[243] In 1997, twenty-four such incidents were reported.^[244] Recent waves of anti-conversion laws passed by some Indian states like [Chhattisgarh](#),^[245] [Gujarat](#),^[246] [Madhya Pradesh](#)^[247] is claimed to be a gradual and continuous institutionalization of [Hindutva](#) by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour of the US State Department.^[248]

Bhutan

See also: [Christianity in Bhutan](#)

[Bhutan](#) is a conservative Buddhist country. Article 7 of the 2008 constitution guarantees religious freedom, but also forbids conversion "by means of coercion or inducement".^[249] According to [Open Doors](#), to many Bhutanese this hinders the ability of Christians to proselytize.^[250]

Before 2008

- In 2002: According to a 2002 report cited by the *Bhutanese Christians Services Centre* NGO, "the 65,000 Christians [in the country] have only one church at their disposal."^[251]
- In 2006: According to [Mission Network News](#), "it's illegal for a Buddhist to become a Christian and church buildings are forbidden. (...) Christians in Bhutan are only allowed to practice their faith at home. Those who openly choose to follow Christ can be expelled from Bhutan and stripped of their citizenship."^[252]
- In 2007: According to [Gospel for Asia](#), "the government has recently begun clamping down on Christians by barring some congregations from meeting for worship. This has caused at least two Gospel for Asia-affiliated churches to temporarily close their doors. (...) Under Bhutan law, it is illegal to attempt to convert people from the country's two predominant religions [Buddhism and Hinduism]."^[253]

After 2008

According to the "Open Doors" ONG, "Persecution in Buddhist Bhutan mainly comes from the family, the community, and the monks who yield a strong influence in the society. Cases of atrocities (i.e. beatings) have been decreasing in number; this may continue as a result of major changes in the country, including the implementation of a new constitution guaranteeing greater religious liberty."^[254]

Nigeria

See also: [Christianity in Nigeria](#) and [Islamist insurgency in Nigeria](#)

In the 11 Northern states of [Nigeria](#) that have introduced the Islamic system of law, the [Sharia](#), sectarian clashes between Muslims and Christians have resulted in many deaths, and some churches have been burned. More than 30,000 Christians were displaced from their homes in [Kano](#), the largest city in northern Nigeria.^[255] [Boko Haram](#) conducts terrorist attacks against Christians.

Philippines

The presence of Roman Catholics and other Christians in Muslim-dominated areas is in part a result of program of population re-distribution; this resulted hostility to Muslims, and Christians are persecuted.

Sri Lanka

Christians along with other religious minorities^[256] have been subjected to increased persecution and attacks owing to the widespread mono-ethnic [Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism](#) in [Sri Lanka](#) and the instinctive support extended by the state for such acts. Several right-wing forces in the country including those which enjoy direct government backing has been in the frontline in propagating anti-Christian sentiments and attacking Christians and their chapels.

Many churches have reported that administrative and police officials have ordered them not to operate any longer because they have not been “authorized” by the state.^[256]

While registration of Buddhist religious organizations is not mandatory in Sri Lanka, the government has been contemplating bringing all religious minorities under regulation for over a year. Churches last year complained they received a circular stating that all new constructions or continuation of places of worship will need prior approval from the [Ministry of Religious Affairs](#).

In March, a large mob attacked a pastor’s home while the family was away and began damaging the property, demanding an end to the church services in the home, ICC said May 5.

The same pastor had been accosted and threatened by a group of Buddhists telling him to close down the church late last year, the human rights organization said. The protesters returned the next day and attacked the building during a worship service, injuring the pastor.^[257]

Also in March, more than 10 churches faced persecution in the form of threats, disturbances, harassment or attacks, mostly from Buddhist monks but sometimes with the assistance of the police or a mob, ICC said.^[257]

Last summer, a 14-year-old boy, the only Christian in his class at school, reportedly was severely beaten and threatened with death if he did not stop spreading Christianity.^[citation needed]

Catholic World News cited a bishop May 1 in Sri Lanka who said the cause of the uptick in persecution is the growth of what he calls the “Buddhist Taliban.”^[257]

Authorities are targeting particularly non-traditional or evangelical churches, apparently due to the suspicion that they might become part of the country’s civil society and pose a threat to the incumbent government in the future.

In addition to this, the state has been fully backing the construction of Buddhist Shrines and destruction of Churches and [Hindu Temples](#) in the [North](#) and the [East](#) where the majority of the people are non-Sinhalese and practice different religions.^{[256][258]}

China

See also: [Christianity in China](#)

The communist government of the People's Republic of China tries to maintain tight control over all religions, so the only legal Christian Churches ([Three-Self Patriotic Movement](#) and [Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association](#)) are those under the [Communist Party of China](#) control. Churches which are not controlled by the government are shut down, and their members are imprisoned.

In 2009, Christians must worship in registered, regulated churches. According to the Jubilee Campaign, an interdenominational lobby group, about 300 Christians caught attending unregistered "[house churches](#)" were in jail in 2004.^[259]

Gong Shengliang, head of the South China Church, was sentenced to death in 2001. Although his sentence was commuted to a jail sentence, [Amnesty International](#) reports that he has been tortured.^[259]

North Korea

See also: [Religion in North Korea § Christianity](#) and [Freedom of religion in North Korea](#)

North Korea leads the list of 50 countries in which Christians are persecuted at current time according to a watch list by [Open Doors](#).^[260] It is currently estimated that more than 50,000 Christians are locked inside concentration camps because of their faith, where they are systematically subjugated to horrible treatment such as unrestrained torture, mass-starvation and even imprisonment and death by asphyxiation in [gas chambers](#).^[261] This entails that a staggering 20% of the Christian community in North Korea live in concentration camps.^[262] The number of Christians being murdered for their faith seems to be increasing as times goes by because in 2013 the death toll was 1,200 and in 2014, this figure doubled rendering it to close to 2,400 martyred Christians. North Korea has earned the top spot 12 years in a row, and that doesn't appear to be changing in 2015 thanks to the Kim Jung Un regime which is mocked in the recent film "[The Interview](#)".^[263]^[unreliable source]

Indochina region

See also: [Christianity in Vietnam](#), [Christianity in Laos](#), [Religion in Cambodia § Christianity](#), [Christianity in Burma](#), [Christianity in Thailand](#), [Freedom of religion in Vietnam](#), [Freedom of religion in Laos](#), [Freedom of religion in Cambodia](#), [Freedom of religion in Burma](#) and [Freedom of religion in Thailand](#)

The establishment of [French Indochina](#) once led to a high Christian population. Regime changes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries led to some increased persecution of minority religious groups. Killings, torture or imprisonment and forced starvation of local groups are common in parts of Vietnam and Laos, especially in more recent years.^[264]

Europe

Denmark

Christians from the Middle East living in Copenhagen have been attacked and threatened by Muslim gangs. The Danish police force in Copenhagen fears the problem is more prevalent than reports of the crime to police since victims fear further reprisals for contacting authorities.^[265]

See also



[*Christianity portal*](#)



[*Human Rights portal*](#)



[*Discrimination portal*](#)

- [Persecution by Christians](#)
- [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#)
- [International Christian Concern](#), a Christian human rights NGO whose mission is to help persecuted Christians
- [Religious pluralism](#)
- [Voice of the Martyrs](#)
- [Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 3035](#)
- [2010 East Texas Church Burnings](#)
- [Category:Christian martyrs](#)

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- Nero Ch 38
- In the earliest extant manuscript, the second Medicean, the *e* in "Chrestianos", Chrestians, has been changed into an *i*; cf. Gerd Theißen, Annette Merz, *Der historische Jesus: ein Lehrbuch*, 2001, p. 89. The reading *Christianos*, Christians, is therefor doubtful. On the other hand, Suetonius (Claudius 25) uses the same "e" transliteration of the Greek Krystos, meaning the anointed one, and associates it with a troublemaker among the Jews
- Nero 16
- IRENAEUS — ☒ The mass slaughter of Lyon’s Christians. 2015. IRENAEUS — ☒ The mass slaughter of Lyon’s Christians. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.christianhistoryproject.org/to-the-decian-persecution/irenaeus/>. [Accessed 23 March 2015].
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