



Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Eritrea



Christian Population: 111,400 (2,1%)

Total Population: 5,223,994

Human Rights Atrocities and Unjust Imprisonment

The authoritarian regime under President Afwerki is responsible for massive human rights violations, especially toward Christians. Christians who aren't members of state-approved churches are considered agents of the West and a threat to the state. Hundreds of Christians who are members of unregistered churches are in prison; some have been held captive for over a decade. Many are forced to work long hours in commercial flower fields, and some are held in shipping containers in scorching temperatures.

How Christians Are Suffering

Young Christians can be forced to join the armed forces, as this is the law of the country, with no opportunity for conscientious objection. Protestants in particular face serious problems in accessing community resources, especially social services provided by the government.

Christians from non-traditional church groups face the harshest persecution both from the government and from the Eritrean Orthodox Church (EOC). Both converts from a Muslim background and cross-denominational converts from an Orthodox background face harsh mistreatment from their families and communities.

Government security forces conduct many house-to-house raids and have arrested hundreds of Christians. The extreme level of pressure and the very high level of state-sanctioned violence forces some Christians to flee the country.

Specific Examples of Persecution

The hundreds of Christians under arrest are being held by the government in harsh conditions, some in shipping containers in places with scorching temperatures. This is despite the reported release of some 30 Christians in July 2018. In the period of June-August 2019, over 150 Christians were arrested in Keren and Godayef. A report from Vatican News on August 29, 2019 states: "Seventy prisoners arrested in June are being held in prison in Ashufera. The term 'prison' refers to a number of underground tunnels that the prisoners are forced to extend, by digging."

The pressure from the Eritrean Orthodox Church against non-traditional church communities partly originates from theological differences but has historical roots as well. Well-organized and with a long tradition, the EOC tends to look down upon other types of Christianity as being newcomers. For the EOC leaders, Eritrea is the home of the Orthodox Church and its Christian history is defined by the Orthodox Church. Other denominations-in particular, Pentecostal churches-are not regarded as legitimate.

Pray for Eritrea

- The government still sees evangelical Christians as spies who want to wreak havoc in the country. Most practice their faith in secret. Pray that the Lord will continue to build His Church despite these circumstances.
- The church continues to pray fervently, win hearts and grow in numbers. Many have overcome the fear of arrest. Thank the Lord for sustaining His Church in Eritrea.
- There are many Christians in prison for their faith. Pray the Lord will sustain them, strengthen their faith and encourage them daily through His Spirit.
- Eritrean Christians have expressed a deep concern over the advancement of radical Islam in their country. Pray that they may have the grace to continue sharing the gospel and that many would come to faith in Jesus.