



# PRAY FOR PERSECUTED BROTHERS & SISTERS

## Pray for the Persecuted Christians in Uzbekistan



Self-Christian Population: 208,450 (about 1 %)    Total Population: 27,800,000  
Evangelical Witness: Less than 40,000 (0.15 % of population)

### Intense Control, Family Pressure

Under the authoritarian rule of the president, the government heavily restricts religious expression, outlawing all unsanctioned religious expression. This means any non-Orthodox Christian group is illegal-and even Orthodox groups can preach only in Russian since doing so in Uzbek is against the law. Additionally, since the culture is largely Muslim, Christians who convert from Islam face pressure and potentially violence from their families and communities. Christian women who came from Islam face increased pressure, sometimes through forced marriage and sexual violence. Although the persecution score is one point lower than last year, the situation for Christians in Uzbekistan remains serious with extreme levels of pressure.

Christians face persecution from the state through the police, secret services and local authorities that monitor religious activities by various means like bugging homes, tapping phones, infiltrating groups and attending church services. Christians in unregistered churches suffer repeatedly from police raids, threats, arrests and fines.

### How Christians Are Suffering

All Christian communities in Uzbekistan are experiencing some form of Christian persecution from the state and/or dominant Muslim culture.

Because they don't usually attempt to make contact with the Uzbek population, Russian Orthodox churches have the least problems from the government. It is the indigenous Christians who are most persecuted from the state and from family, friends and the community. They experience pressure and occasionally physical violence to renounce their faith and return to Islam. Some converts are beaten and locked up by their families (placed under house arrest) and eventually excommunicated. And in areas with unregistered churches, Christians suffer repeatedly from police raids, arrests and fines.

### Examples

On February 9, 2019, an Uzbek woman was killed by her husband because she had recently become a Christian. "Umida," a Muslim-background Christian, was attempting to flee the country to seek refuge in Istanbul with Christian friends, when her husband confronted her at Tashkent Airport and slit her throat. (Source: Barnabas Fund)

On November 25, 2018, 20 plain clothes officials (rising later to 40 officials) raided a group of Baptists meeting for Sunday morning worship in Yashnobod District in Uzbekistan's capital, Tashkent. For the first known time in such raids, members of the army-the National Guard-took part in the raid. Fourteen of those at the meeting were forcibly put into a bus and taken to Yashnobod police station where they were pressured to sign statements that they had participated in "an unauthorized meeting." When they refused to do this, their personal details were recorded, and they were interrogated for nine-and-a-half hours. Officials also photographed and recorded the details of each individual who had attended the worship meeting, including names, addresses and workplaces. (Source: Forum 18)

On November 19, 2018, police in Uzbekistan's eastern Namangan region raided a group of Protestants meeting in a home for a meal and to read the Bible. Police searched the apartment without a warrant and confiscated legally purchased literature, including Bibles. Officers arrested all eight Christians and took them to the police station, where they were questioned until early the next morning. Police forced most of the believers to sign statements written by the police and said that they might be prosecuted for possession of the religious literature they had legally purchased. (Source: Forum 18)

### Pray for Uzbekistan

- Pray with believers who have converted from Islam and experience isolation in their new faith, as well as the fear and pressure they experience knowing that their family's discovery of their conversion could mean ridicule, persecution and even death.
- Uzbekistan has one of the harshest dictatorships in Central Asia. All forms of opposition and deviations from the norm (for example, Christianity) are attacked. Pray that the eyes of the country's leaders would be opened to the truth.
- No religious activities beyond state-run and state-controlled institutions are allowed and unregistered churches face police raids, arrests and fines. Pray for true religious freedom.
- Officially the country has religious freedom however, it is very hard to obtain registration for religious communities. Pray believers have the fortitude to complete the process.